The Unreported Year – photo special

NI 479 January/February 2015
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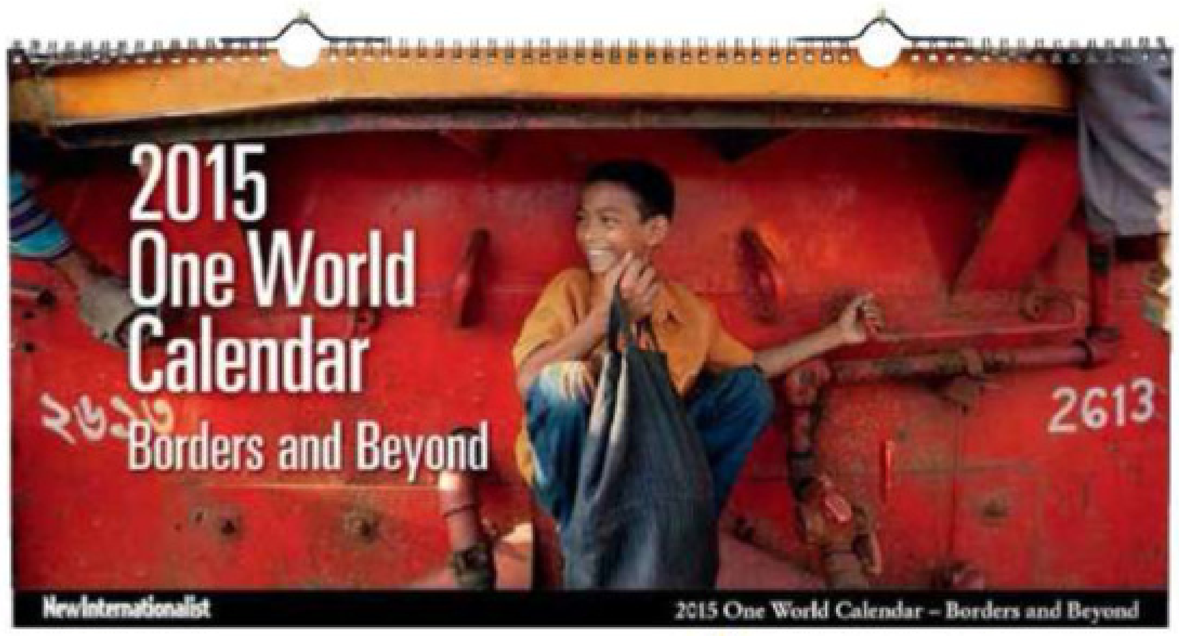

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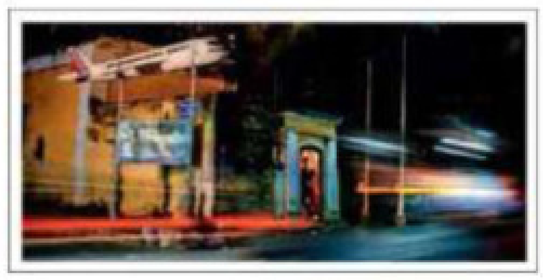

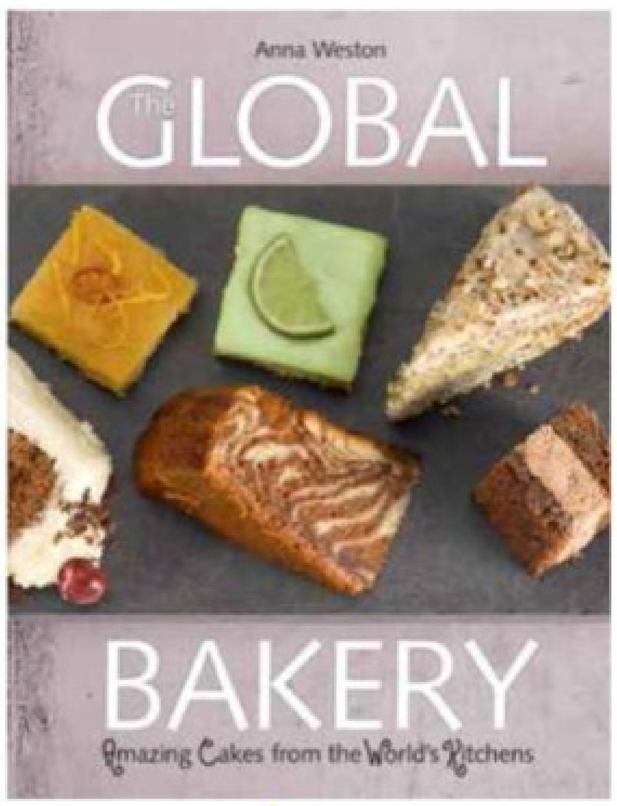

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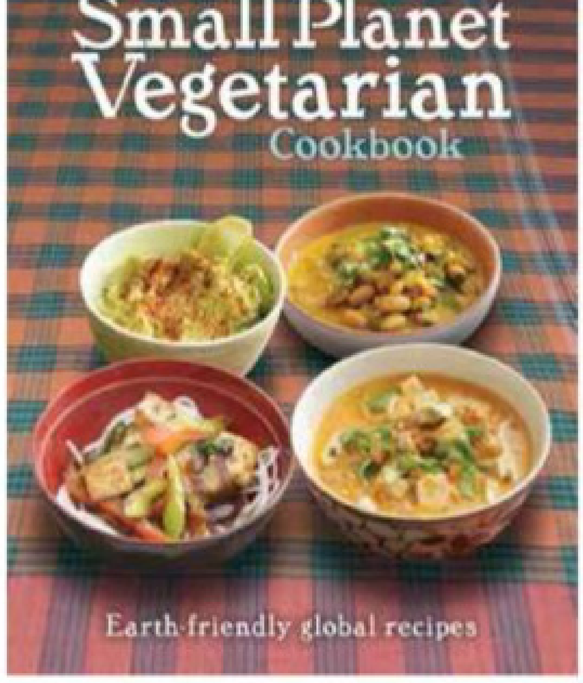

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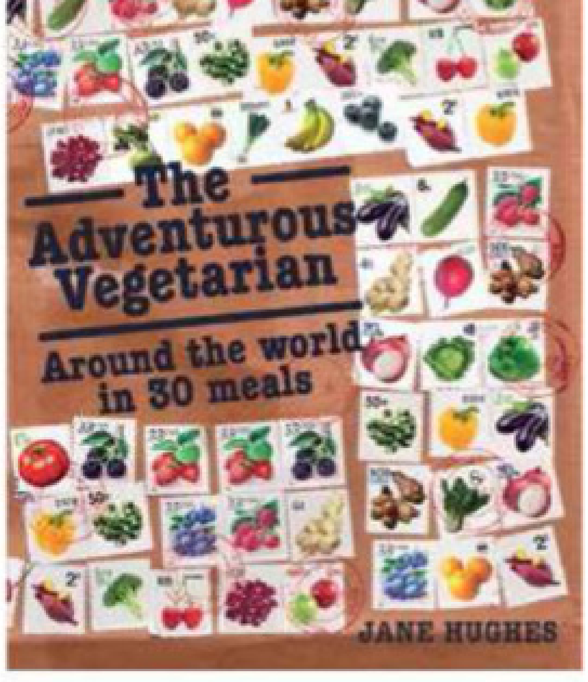

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Guest editor's letter

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THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST workers' co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice.

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'We are living in transformative times'

Kristinn Ingvarsson

As chair of the International Modern Media Institute, I want to say how pleased we are to partner with the **New Internationalist** on the Big Story this month to focus on the challenges and opportunities facing democracy in the digital era.

We are living in transformative times and there are amazing citizens' initiatives occurring all over the world as people are waking up to the idea that they not only can but need to co-create their societies.

The good news is that it has never been easier to do, thanks to new developments in digital technology and the way we now use it to engage and interact. I have one task for you, for us: let's dream together of how we want the future to be. Some of my favourite tools for achieving that task are to be found in this magazine, along with articles from expert journalists and activists commissioned by IMMI Director Guðjón Idir.

Elsewhere in this month's **New Internationalist** you will find our review of the best films, books and music this year, and an article on the unlikely relationship between Augusto Pinochet and Chile's indie music revival. ■

Birgitta Jónsdóttir

BIRGITTA JÓNSDÓTTIR
MP and poetician for the Pirate Party, Iceland

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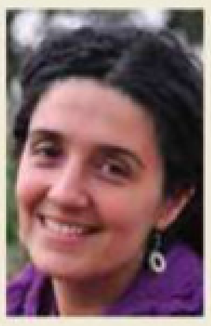
This month's contributors include:

Jillian C York is a writer and activist whose work focuses on the intersection of technology and policy. She is Director for Freedom of Expression at the Electronic Frontier Foundation and a fellow at the Centre for Internet and Human Rights, European University Viadrina.

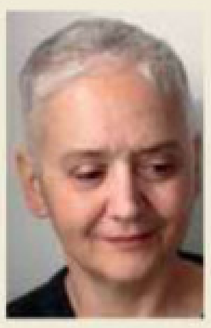
Molly Crabapple, who supplied this month's front cover, is an artist and writer in New York. She has drawn in Guantánamo Bay, Abu Dhabi's migrant labour camps, and with rebels in Syria. Her illustrated memoir, *Drawing Blood*, will be published by Harper Collins in 2015.

Nick Davies is a British investigative journalist, writer and documentary maker. In 2011 he won the Paul Foot Award for his series of articles in the *Guardian* that helped expose the phone-hacking scandal at the *News of the World*.



Andalusia Knoll is a freelance multimedia journalist based in Mexico City. Hailing originally from New York City, she has spent the last decade reporting on immigrant rights, prison justice, struggles for autonomy, the War on Drugs and the security crisis in Mexico. andalalucha.tumblr.com

Jean-Pierre Kepseu is a professional photojournalist from Cameroon. His passion for photography started at school and he has now worked as a freelancer for 15 years, chasing images across the African continent.



Louise Gray is our music columnist and author of *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Music*. Louise also writes for *The Wire*, *Musicworks*, broadsheets and various arts publications.

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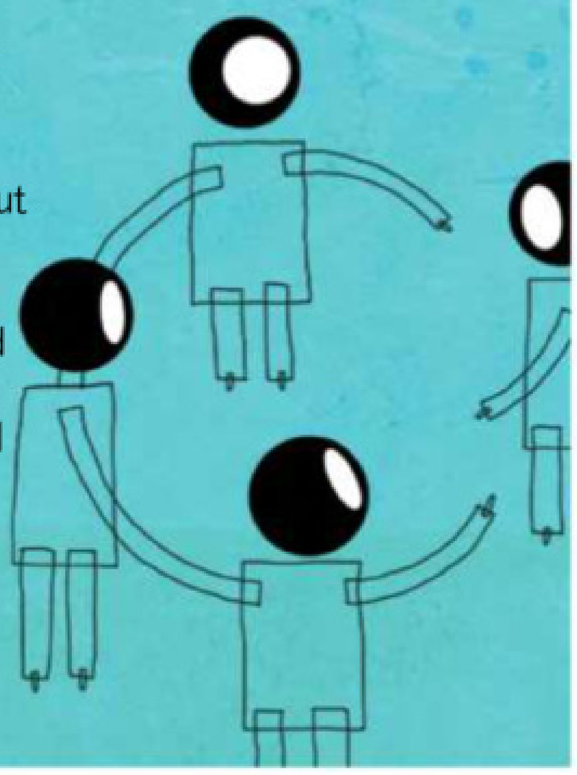

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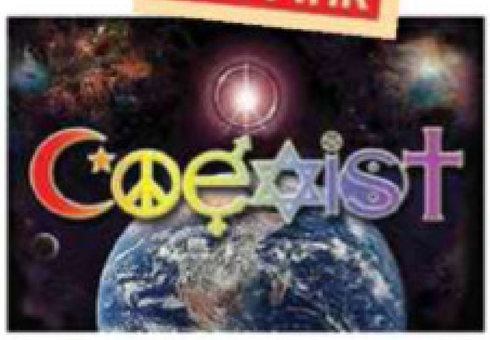

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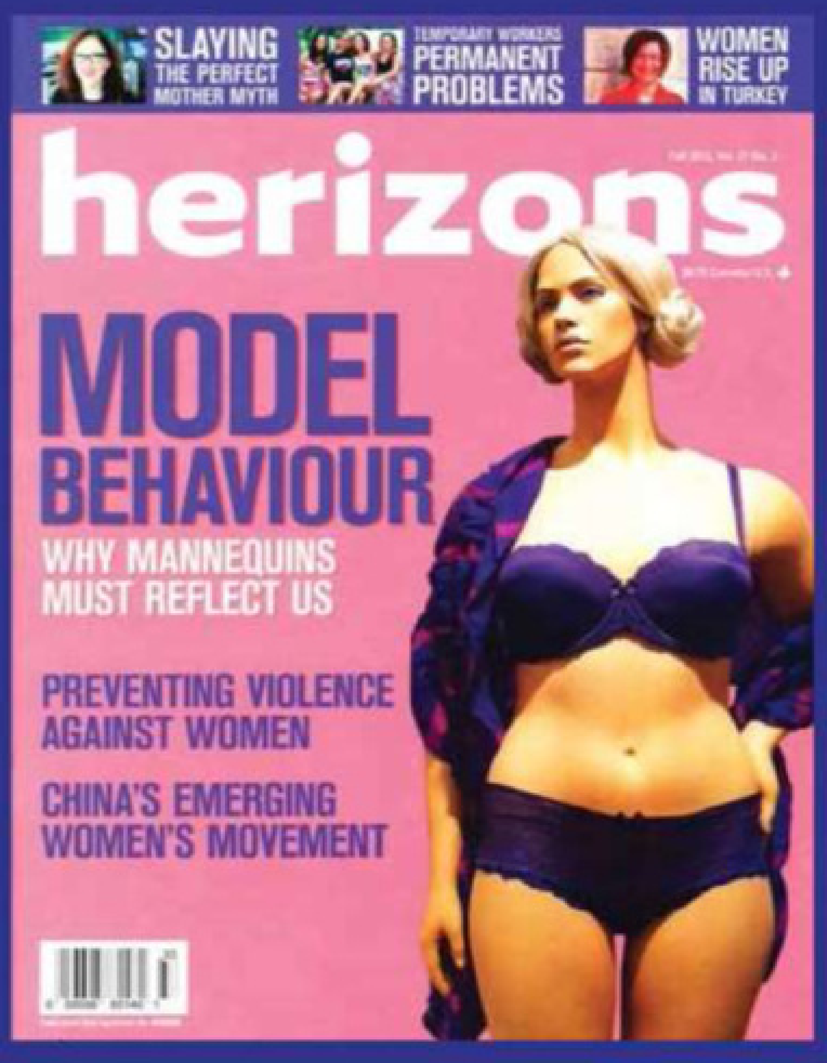

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Johann S. Karlsson/Getty Images

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Letters

Praise, blame and all points in between? Give us your feedback.

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They might be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Letters should be sent to **letters@newint.org** or to your local **NI** office. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.

Different purpose

What exactly is Dinyar Godrej advocating in his article on NGOs (**NI 478**)? His basic criticism seems to be that NGOs have not as yet managed to abolish capitalism. No-one can argue with that. But the underlying implication appears to be that Oxfam *et al* should abandon raising money for schools and medical facilities and concentrate on bringing about the revolution. I suggest that people in the Global South who are in good health and reasonably well-educated are more likely to come together to take political action than those whose energy is sapped by hunger and ill-health. Some NGOs – Christian Aid for one – already support partners who enable communities to fight for rights that are being denied them by their own governments.

NGOs, as charities, are expected to be non-political, but he concludes with the sentence, 'They might as well get their hands truly dirty.' The consequences of this, in the UK at least, is investigation by the Charity Commission, leading to possible loss of charitable status, and no doubt then of supporters as well. That is precisely why some of the UK-based overseas aid charities, as they were called at the time, including Oxfam, set up in 1970 the World Development Movement, which is not a charity but a campaigning organization, and about to be rebranded as Global Justice Now.

Linda Marshall Staines, England

Waiting for the pitchforks

I have been aware for some time now of the steady co-opting of NGOs by corporations and national governments (**NI 478**).

Correction

Owing to a typo the Hindu nationalistic RSS organization was wrongly named as the RRS in the caption to a photograph accompanying Dionne Bunsha's article in **NI 478**.

It is a thoroughly depressing development in the virtually universal corruption of all economic activities to favour the global plutocrats.

I am reminded of the TED Talk by Nick Hanaeur, 'Beware, fellow plutocrats, the pitchforks are coming.' Thomas Piketty's recent tome *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* also suggests that, like so many times before, global capitalism has re-entered a phase where we are well down the path towards a 'pitchforks' solution and there is again no indication that plutocrats are the least bit interested in exploring alternatives to avoid it.

Truly unlimited greed un-moderated by governance in the interest of the broader society.

Bill Rathborne London, Canada

More, please

November's edition (**NI 477**) has to be the most gripping and immediately relevant set of articles in a long while. If there was anything I didn't understand about the immorality of Big Oil – and there was much – I now understand a bit better. Information from Jess Worth about not just the hoped-for collapse of Big Oil but the much more hopeful prospects for alternative energy, helps turn despair felt by many into a real goal to aim for.

But please don't leave it at that. Come back to this, our most pressing problem again, and soon. And give us information about what we can do to move it on. Not just demos and political action, although that too, but practical leads about how we can take positive personal action.

Malcolm Mudie Leintwardine, England

Taking the initiative

Thanks to Jess Worth and her fellow activists, taking the initiative on our behalf against Big Oil (**NI 477**). They are more courageous than I could be, and I am grateful to them.

Oil companies have a past history of 'greenwash'. Back in the 1950s, I was fascinated by Shell's monthly posters of wild flowers of the countryside which decorated our junior school walls. Indeed the fascination with the wild flowers has persisted, though not the liking for fossil fuels.

Veronica Scargill Wilstead, England

Unceasing war

Israel's war on Gaza has never ceased. With so many hospitals and houses destroyed, people left with no place to shelter as heavy rains pour down, the water not safe to drink, and no medicines to treat the wounded, people will continue to die.

The importance of Dr Jabr's article ('A deeper pain', **NI 477**) is that she points out the constant psychological warfare being inflicted on all Palestinians, but most dramatically on Gazans. Israel is at war with Palestinians' self-image, their historical memories, their culture, their dreams of a better life, and their self-respect.

Lois Griffiths Christchurch, New Zealand/Aotearoa

The price tag

Kate Smurthwaite's defence of Raif Badawi and of free speech (**NI 477**) is entirely admirable. However, I'd like to add some notes from the other side of the pond. Here in the US where everything is free market, including the judiciary, 'free speech' is used by big capital as a bludgeon to subdue democracy. Why would anyone, for example, vote against GMO labelling? Well, they probably would not have, but the Court has declared corporations are people and money is speech, so business people can spend millions saturating voters with the false claim that approving such a bill would cause prices to skyrocket. Then although 90 per cent of the people favoured gun control legislation, our congress voted against it, deafened as they were by the roar of money-as-speech stuffing the pockets of 'our' representatives.

Paul Siemering Cambridge, US

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the **New Internationalist**.

I'm a New Internationalist

Magdalena Bajer

We live rurally, in Canada, so I discovered *New Internationalist* when I was searching the tiny local library for alternative history and current events sources for my children's home-schooling 'textbooks', some 25 years ago. My view has been that teens sense the world is unjust. They aren't sure what to be angry about and don't know how to channel anger to bring about change in the world. **NI** provides those details.

We really value **NI** as a reliable alternative news source, even though we may not agree with the stance of some of the articles. We value the details your staff research on topics that cannot remain in the headlines, but which we deem important. Your magazine preserves sanity in a world overstimulated with news constantly reporting violence and banality.

We prefer to see the world with eyes open. We care about it. A rural lifestyle, mostly in nature/wilderness; subsistence farming; ensuring that there is time for important interests like art and life-long education; and an intense experience of parenting: this has been my career.

I run a rather radical micro-business so the knowledge that I am doing my passion and not harming anybody or the planet has had to suffice in times of insufficient income.

As we read **NI**, as the whole family reads it, I look forward to evolving topics and philosophies in what I see as a caring, involved, international community. ■

Are you a New Internationalist? If you would like to appear in this space email: iloveni@newint.org

Peace, in other words

Where guns and knives talk loudest, RUBY DIAMONDE witnesses a people desperate for another sort of conversation.

A few weeks ago Bangui erupted in violence again, when a Central African from one of the Muslim quarters visited another part of the city.

His motives are disputed – some say he threw a grenade into a crowded street, others that he was merely visiting friends. Whatever his intent, he was dragged from his motorbike and killed, his body set on fire, then dumped outside a mosque in the main city market, known locally as Cinq Kilo.

Hours later a Christian taxi driver was murdered in Cinq Kilo in retaliation, and Bangui was wracked with heavy gun and grenade fire from dusk till dawn.

One of the main rebel movements, the anti-Balaka, used these tit-for-tat killings to demand the resignation of the President and Prime Minister, erect roadblocks across the city, and to ransack houses and small businesses.

Taxi drivers went on strike, schools and businesses shut down and we all stayed at home for days – and slept badly.

Tragically, attacks like these strike Bangui every few months, as rebels fight the government for power over the country and its resources. The two main rebel groups – the anti-Balaka and the Seleka – are also embroiled in vicious internal power struggles. Both sides target young men and boys from poor families to fight for them. Rebels and politicians have manipulated Central Africans into fearing each other, because they profit from dividing and ruling local communities.

This time, however, we were hopeful the violence might swiftly be brought under control. The new UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSCA (the Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic) had recently arrived, and had already deployed more than 6,500 peacekeepers, the vast majority of them in Bangui. Central Africans call the UN peacekeepers *Casques Bleus*, as they all wear blue helmets.

But within days it was clear most of the new Casques Bleus were out of their depth; anti-Balaka fighters attacked them, killing three peacekeepers, and many others had to be assisted by other international military forces based in Bangui. At least a dozen Central Africans were killed, and many civilians also horrifically injured by bullets, grenades and machetes.

During a lull in the shooting, I called my driver and we sped into Bangui's small *Centre Ville*, just down the hill from my house, because I needed food, credit for my mobile phone, and a bottle of wine. Despite the danger, vendors were squatting on the sidewalks with small baskets of fruits and vegetables, and when I got out of the car they crowded round, asking, then begging me, just to buy something. The banks were shut and they badly needed cash.

Some, like Gerard, know me personally, because I've been buying fruit and vegetables from them for more than a year. As Gerard filled my bag with papayas and avocados, I asked how he and his family were doing.

'We had to leave our home to sleep with relatives somewhere safer,' he told me, grim-faced. 'The government is doing nothing to help us; and what about the Casques Bleus – where are they? We need protection, and we need *ndoti siriri*.'

Ndoti siriri means peacebuilding in the national Sango language that is spoken all over the Central African Republic. Billboards across Bangui declare how much this country needs ndoti siriri, almost like it is a product that can be bought or sold. But the CAR government has already negotiated with both the Seleka and anti-Balaka, though neither movement has committed itself to disarming, nor to releasing brutalized child soldiers, the next generation of rebel fighters, who have never experienced peace.

A few days after I spoke to Gerard, the UN *did* manage to bring the situation under control, with the help of resident French and other EU troops.

But will this fragile calm hold?

MINUSCA is the eighth peacekeeping mission in CAR since 1997: each has in turn been replaced by a larger, and more expensive, new peacekeeping mission – and all have failed to deliver long-term peace to CAR. Because peacekeeping without peacebuilding is doomed to fail.

Ndoti siriri is a radical process of listening to those community activists and leaders who understand this conflict best, then setting a national dialogue agenda that Central Africans will invest and believe in, because it is about all their futures. Then maybe this peacekeeping mission could actually be the last. ■

Ruby Diamonde is a pseudonym.

Illustration: Sarah John

NEPAL

Life goes on with leprosy

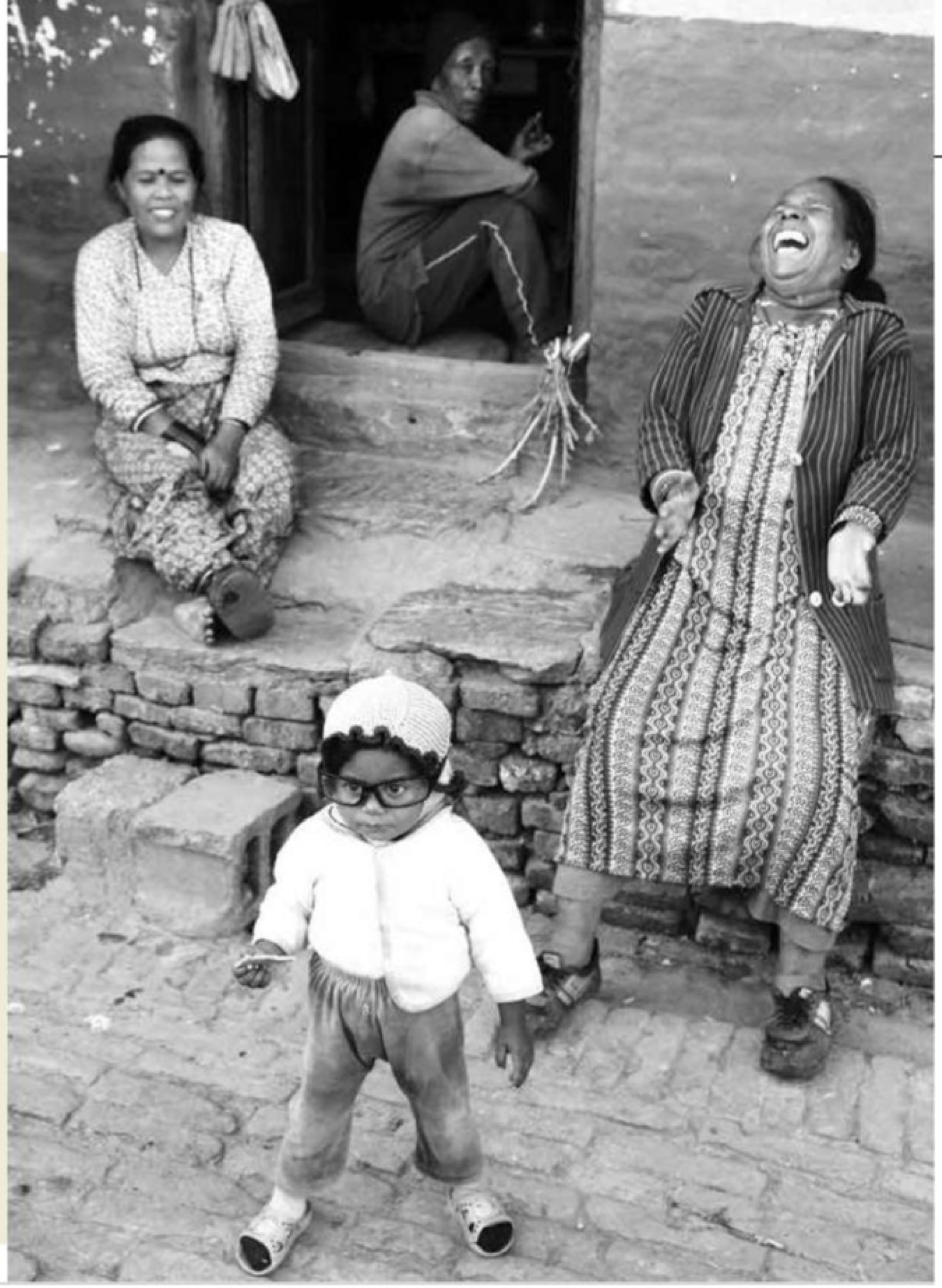
Khokana is a 150-year-old state-funded leprosy colony. Home to 170 leprosy-affected people, it lies nestled among the paddy fields, half an hour from Nepal's bustling capital, Kathmandu.

Ignorance and stigma still shroud this disease, which is curable and has no lasting effects if treated in its early stages. Left untreated, however, the nerve damage can result in severe disability, as well as the rejection of sufferers by their families and communities.

World Leprosy Day on 25 January is a reminder that, far from being eradicated, around 250,000 people are diagnosed with leprosy every year, and more than three million people globally are living with the irreversible disabilities caused by late diagnosis. ■

Photographer **Tom Bradley** has been documenting the lives of people with leprosy since 2009. See more of his photos at **isleprosyeliminated.com**

Find out more about leprosy: **leprosymission.org.uk**



Tom Bradley

MEXICO

'We are all Ayotzinapa'

'I am proud of all of you who have lifted up my voice, my courage and my free spirit,' echo the imagined words of murdered student Alexander Mora Venancio before a crowd of tens of thousands in Mexico City. 'I invite you to redouble the struggle, that my death be not in vain,' continues the letter, written by his father when he learned that recently discovered human remains belonged to his son.

Alexander was one of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa teachers' college in Guerrero, who were violently abducted by municipal police in September 2014 and turned over to a drug cartel. The cartel supposedly killed them at a garbage dump, burning their bodies and dumping the ashes in a nearby river. An Austrian forensic lab identified the first student from the remains: Alexander Mora Venancio.

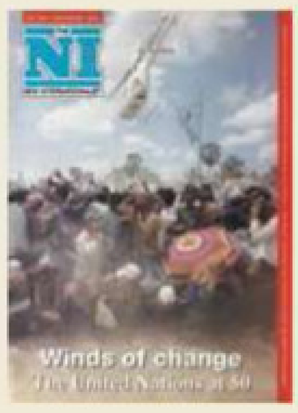
The families of the missing students have refused to back down, and the case has struck a deep chord in Mexican society. Over the past eight years, Mexico's failed war on drugs has seen 100,000 people killed and 40,000 'disappeared'. Since the students' mass disappearance, hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets to demand that they be returned alive, that President Enrique Peña Nieto resign, and for an end to the collusion between drug cartels and government officials.

The phrase *Todos Somos Ayotzinapa* (We are all Ayotzinapa) and the number 43 are emblazoned on cab and store windows and city walls. They fill social networks, which have connected the movement with people across the world. The Mexican government has responded with increased repression, but the protests show no signs of abating. ■

Andalusia Knoll

This is an excerpt from a blog which can be found at **newint.org/blog**

20 and 10 years ago...



Looking back at these two issues on the United Nations, it is striking that we haven't even discussed the possibility of marking the 70th anniversary of the institution as we did its 50th (nin.tl/UNat50) and its 60th (nin.tl/UNat60). Why is that? Probably because the organization seems incapable of change. When I examined the state of the UN on its 50th

ON THE WEB newint.org

Burma's 'transition' leaves women's rights behind

Carbon bubbles in the boardroom

TUNISIA

Prison for police

In a landmark case, police rapists have been jailed in Tunisia. 'Meriem' was raped by two policemen in September 2012. She was then charged with 'atteinte à la pudeur' (offence against decency) to silence her, causing an international scandal. But Meriem rejected silence, becoming the first woman in Tunisia ever to make a complaint against the police for sexual assault.

She endured 14 hearings until the appeal verdict on 20 November 2014, which gave 15-year sentences. Astonishingly, Meriem remains under investigation by the police as her attackers have made new complaints against her.

Even though Tunisia was in the midst of a presidential election campaign at the time of the verdict, there was almost complete political silence on this case. It touches on two highly sensitive subjects: police impunity – the poisonous legacy of the dictator, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali; and Tunisia's conservative traditions, which silence women who are victims of violence.

Nevertheless, Tunisia recently lifted most reservations on the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and human rights and feminist groups are now campaigning for the new government to enact a delayed draft law aimed at confronting violence against women. ■

Timothy Baster and **Isabelle Merminod**

Introducing...

Klaus Iohannis

Romanians, fed up with corruption and politics-as-usual, went against the grain in their November presidential contest, electing Klaus Iohannis in decisive fashion with nearly 55 per cent of the vote. Iohannis, a centre-right politician from the minority German community, was considered an unlikely outsider, yet became the country's first victorious minority presidential candidate. The result is a slap in the face for the social democratic government of Victor Ponta (the runner-up) and his increasingly authoritarian style. During two years in power Ponta had supported legislation that tolerated impunity for a notoriously corrupt political class and smothered investigative journalism. His U-turn on the controversial Rosia Montana goldmining project (which he opposed until he got into power) proved particularly costly.

While there were many reasons to vote against Ponta, Iohannis' programme of privatization and a minimalist state has little to offer the 20 per cent of workers who cannot live on their low salaries, and the nearly 40 per cent of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Still, Iohannis' drive to rid his party of corrupt heavyweights will be popular, although his political capital might not survive without them. And cohabitation between Iohannis and Punta's chastened government may prove a welcome change from the kind of autocratic populism recently on display among Romania's neighbours – particularly the Orbán regime in Hungary and the rise of Poland's fascist youth movement. If Iohannis tempers his economic liberalism with a dose of political liberalism, Romanians may be spared some of this nonsense. ■

Richard Swift

Octav Ganea/AP/Press Association Images

LEBANON

Ripped apart

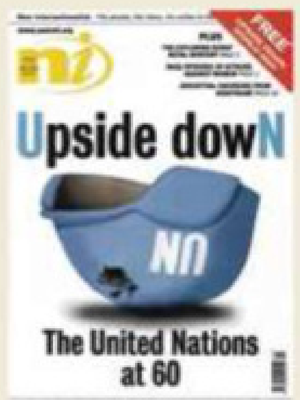
Lebanon has begun deporting locally born children of migrant workers, who were previously able to apply for residency if they enrolled in school. In 2014, 10 NGOs reported the issue to Human Rights Watch (HRW), concerned that the country's security agency has decided – with no justification – to deny residency permits for a number of low-wage migrant children from poor and war-ravaged countries.

There are more than 200,000 migrant workers in Lebanon. Roula Hamati, advocacy officer at Insan Association in Beirut, fears that children who are ripped apart from their families could fall victim to trafficking and exploitation: 'We are very concerned because all the children were born and raised in Lebanon. They have no ties to their country of origin and many do not even speak the language.'

One father from South Sudan related how his two young children were not granted residency and were forced to go back to his country, which is in the midst of war. Nadim Houry, Middle East and North Africa deputy director for HRW, has called on the Lebanese authorities immediately to 'revoke this directive, as it interferes with the right to family life.' ■

Sophie Cousins

birthday, the main piece was headed 'Can the UN change enough to win renewed credibility and respect? Or will it be blown away?' Yet here we are, 20 years on, with the same archaic structures still in place, with Britain and France still wielding their vetos as if the days of empire were in full swing, and with the UN still having to go cap in hand to the major powers if it needs money for an emergency or troops for a peacekeeping mission.



It makes no sense at all in the 21st century. Yet David Ransom and I, 10 years apart, each came to the conclusion that, for all its manifold weaknesses, the world would be a much worse place without the UN – especially without the work of some of its specialist agencies. 'While we may lament the fact that the UN's rhetoric too seldom translates into action, even the limited prick to conscience that rhetoric and peer-group pressure provide may be preferable to no acknowledgement of responsibility for the poor at all.' ■

Chris Brazier

Why has our government relaxed the criteria for granting arms exports?

Caught in the crossfire

Greenham Common's final act

Seniors take on climate change

Whoever thinks environmental activists are always young has clearly never heard of Grandparents Climate Campaign, the Knitting Nannas or For Our Grandchildren – groups made up of senior citizens united in the fight against climate change. If that means fighting by unconventional means, then so be it.

The Knitting Nannas Against Gas, based in Australia, are far from being a bunch of 'sweet, little old ladies', even though they describe themselves as 'mild, middle-class and conservative'. The group came about with the intention of bearing witness (while knitting) to politicians' lack of action against climate change. While organizing knitting sit-ins (knit-ins) might not be the most dangerous form of activism, some Nannas have been arrested for trespassing, and even prosecuted for their involvement in otherwise-peaceful protests. They have a short documentary to their name, 'The Knitting Nannas', as well as an upcoming international conference in March.

In Norway, the Grandparents' Climate Campaign has been lobbying the government against its shady oil deals since 2006. Now with over 2,000 members, it organizes rallies, torchlight vigils and tours, all to bring the environment back into the spotlight. Says member Mette Newth: 'It's a conservative campaign, not revolutionary at all. It's about conserving and protecting and preserving our planet from further desecration.' Having visited Norway and talked to

Australia's Knitting Nannas: tackling climate change one stitch at a time.

Jeremy Buckingham under a CC Licence

Mette, Nancy Lindisfarne set up a similar group, Grandparents Climate Action, in Oxford. It took part in a rally in 2014 calling on Oxford University and the city council to divest from fossil fuels.

Across the Atlantic, For Our Grandchildren is a Canadian network with international links connecting grandparents throughout the world and providing a platform to mobilize and teach grandchildren about the issues surrounding the health of the environment and our impact on it. 'Convincing our governments – or electing new ones – to start building the green economy of tomorrow will be the greatest legacy we will leave our grandkids,' says founder Anthony Ketchum. By 2041, seniors are projected to make up nearly a quarter of the Canadian population, making the 'grey vote' – and 'grey activism' – more important than ever. ■

Cristiana Moisescu

COLOMBIA

Displaced by blood and fire

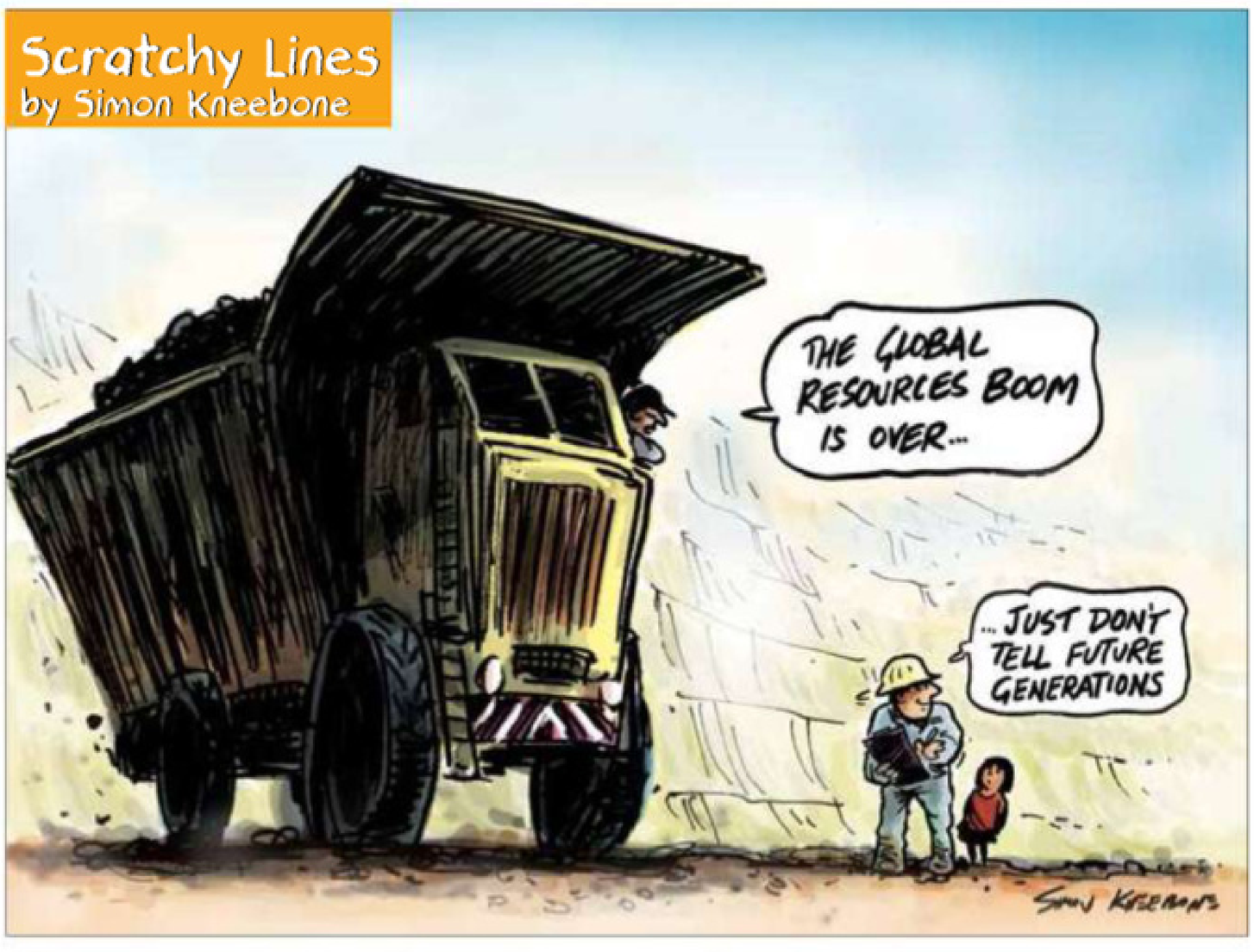
Representatives of communities devastated by global coalmining projects joined the fossil fuel divestment movement for a tour of Britain in October. It aimed to link the local damage being wrought by coal with the global damage caused by carbon emissions, to strengthen the case against both with investors.

Rogelio Ustate Arregocés was one member of the delegation, which visited universities, elected representatives, investors and some of the mining companies themselves. He was violently displaced from Tabaco, his village in Colombia, 13 years ago – to make way for the largest coalmine in Latin America. His shattered community has still not been resettled.

The vast open-cast Cerrejón mine is jointly owned by three London-listed companies: Anglo American, BHP Billiton and Glencore Xstrata. 'We've suffered a wave of forced displacement,' explained Rogelio. 'Cerrejón has displaced 20 communities. In some cases it has committed crimes against humanity. In 2001 it destroyed my entire village with machines, bringing in the national police force and army to take people forcefully out of their homes: 427 families were evicted, displaced by blood and fire.'

Despite a court ruling that Tabaco must be rebuilt, it hasn't happened. Rogelio, who is a traditional jewellery-maker and poet, now spends much of his time advocating for the social, political and cultural rights of displaced communities.

Having attended the BHP Billiton Annual General Meeting while in London, his opinion of mining companies remains scathing. 'I asked them when they were going to cease



TURKEY

Battling for green space

One of Istanbul's few remaining green spaces is in danger of being gobbled up, according to environmental activists. In late October the Üsküdar Municipality began construction of a mosque complex in a parking lot just outside the protected Validebağ Grove, home to over 7,000 trees, several historical buildings and about 120 species of migratory birds.

Activists are wary of the government's rapid and often environmentally destructive 'urban transformation' projects. About 100 people have been holding a non-stop vigil since police-escorted bulldozers started excavating without legal permission on 21 October. 'Keep it as it is,' pleads Onur Akgül, an activist with Northern Forests Defence. 'Let us walk there. Let the birds sing. Let us have a life integrated with nature.'

The campaigners say large, controversial development projects often start with seemingly benign mosques. 'A mosque is a key to get into difficult areas,' says Can Atalay, a lawyer with the Chamber of Architects. He fears it will be followed by several shops. 'We've seen many examples of this.'

Dozens of riot police have attacked the occupiers with pepper spray, water cannon and rubber bullets several times. Atalay was seized, beaten and threatened. 'They told us they would put a bullet in each of our heads,' he said. On 31 October a court's stay of execution on the construction was controversially reversed on appeal, with many accusing the municipality of interference.

Despite Istanbul's poor environmental record, the city is bidding to be European Green Capital of 2017. 'Istanbul is now a city with very little green space per person,' says Akgül. According to consulting agency World Cities Culture Forum, Istanbul's green spaces make up only 1.5 per cent of the city – considerably less than other European capitals such as London (38 per cent) and Berlin (14.4 per cent). ■

Nick Ashdown

occupying [our] territory. They have violated Mother Earth, violated the constitution and made local communities strangers in our own land. But BHP responded evasively. The nature of a trans-national is not to take social responsibility. Their presence is synonymous with misery.

'Some 12,000 hectares of forest have been destroyed, leading to climate change and drought; 3,000 children have died in the last three years from disease and malnutrition, as the mine drains the water supply. Now they want to divert the Rancheria River to access another 500 million tonnes of coal. This will affect an entire ecosystem and displace even more communities.'

Nevertheless, Rogelio felt his visit to the country where much of the finance fuelling this voracious project originates was worthwhile. 'I came here to ask for solidarity, and our community voices have been joined by voices of support for our cause. With the help of the international community, I feel optimistic.'

The Dirty Coal Tour was organized by a number of campaigning groups, including People & Planet's student Fossil Free campaign, the London Mining Network and World Development Movement. ■

Jess Worth

OMAN

Time for an oil change?

Predicted to run out of petroleum by 2050, Oman will suffer from the recent 40-per-cent dive in crude oil prices. The consequent spending cuts and business closures will hurt the already beleaguered Omani working class – 80 per cent of whom are migrants – and could incite the kinds of protests last seen during the Arab Spring.

In February 2011, activists took to the streets and targeted aspects of society they deemed corrupt and unjust. Some picketed a shopping mall for two days; others tried to block the export of oil products at Sohar port. With one hand, the Sultan waved in some limited political reforms; but with the other fist, he smashed down on critics of the regime, six of whom were jailed for writing 'provocative' blogs.

Now the elderly and childless Sultan is in ill health and there is speculation about who will succeed him. Could this be the opportunity for democratization that Omanis have been waiting for? ■

Tom Sykes

Reasons to be cheerful

Teachers ban Coke

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has banned Coca-Cola products from its events and facilities, recommending that schools throughout the country follow their lead. The move is a response to Coca-Cola's appalling child labour and human rights record, substantially evidenced in the media. This will affect the 1.8 million members of the AFT, although the National Education Association (NEA) is still failing to take a stand on the matter.

Masai safe from eviction

For more than two years, a Dubai-based company has had its eye fixed on securing a luxury hunting and safari ground on 1,500 square kilometres of land just outside Tanzania's Serengeti National Park. The project threatened to relocate 40,000 Masai herders forcibly, with the Tanzanian government suspected of back-channelling the deal. After an international outcry, President Jakaya Kikwete tweeted a pledge never to evict the Masai people – though it has yet to be put in writing.

'Poo' bus leaves no waste

Planning a trip between Bristol and Bath anytime soon? You should hop on the 'Bio- Bus', powered entirely by food and… human waste. That's right: this British bus runs on biomethane gas sourced from sewage and human excrement, transforming it into a green transport solution. Let's hope the smell stays green, too.

Democracy in the digital era

Our current democratic models are crumbling and outdated. We need to make something more real and meaningful. Activist and politician Birgitta Jónsdóttir points to how it might be done.

We live in remarkable, transformative times. We have the library of Alexandria at our fingertips; all the recorded knowledge of the world is being digitized and made available through the Internet Archive, a free, non-profit digital library offering universal access to books, music, knowledge, news and web pages.[1]

None of this will help us, however, if we don't know how to apply wisdom to this vast knowledge.

The problems we face often feel monumental, almost impossible to solve. I am from the generation that lived under the shadow of possible nuclear war and the end of life on this planet. That risk is still there but others threaten the planet in a far more tangible way today – such as global warming and the monumental scale of environmental destruction.

Meanwhile, our democratic models are hollow and crumbling at an alarming rate as we move further into a new era of complexity, technology and interconnectivity.

There is a deep and growing distrust of so-called democratic institutions and of the politicians we elect to represent us.

Protest is on the rise – as is totalitarianism and fascism. A dangerous road to populism is being paved, and we must learn from history to avoid the dark barbarism of nationalism and war.

Democracy is giving way to oppression. The police are militarized against their own people, while the élite or '1%' , who are at war with the rest of us, make use of the incredibly complex systems they have created to maintain their power.

Johann S. Karlsson / Getty Images

Protest rises as distrust grows. These Icelanders are protesting outside the parliament in Reykjavik.

Our states are built around systems that are outdated, created in simpler times and for smaller societies. Today, those systems no longer serve the people but are simply self-serving and self-preserving.

Welfare has been hollowed and is on the verge of collapse, often as a way to privatize it. We are running out of planet and our systems are unable to do anything about it.

Draconian 'anti-terrorism' laws and secrecy have somehow become the norm. 'Developed' democracies have become a freaky mix of *Brave New World* and *1984*.

We are being manipulated every day into believing we are powerless, that there is nothing that can change these systems; but this is a lie.

We have never been as connected as we are today, as able to share real-time stories of success and failure. Therefore, our learning curve is steeper than ever before. We are sharing, downloading, remixing and co-creating every day without knowing the power that lies in the abundance of information we are processing or storing.

Naked in the system

Some of the most amazing innovation and creativity in the history of humankind has emerged in conditions of extreme stress. As human beings we have now reached a stage where we have to evolve to the next level, or we will fail to deliver a sustainable world to the next generation.

But we are naked in this system of interconnectivity, and vulnerable because large corporations and states can download one's digital persona as 'commodity', with no regard for local and global laws.

In a recent addition to the UN charter of human rights our digital persona should, in theory, enjoy the same rights to privacy as our offline persona. But this has had no effect in practice.

It is therefore of utmost importance that we encourage people to participate in digital democracies, that we encourage states to open

their data, and that we protect our increasingly violated constitutional right to privacy.

I have travelled the world, met people from all walks of life, physically and through the wonders of cyberspace. I have seen the remarkable progress of the digital era, but I have also witnessed its dystopia.

I know and know of so many people who have been imprisoned, are serving time or have been made stateless for exposing the raw truth, for enabling sharing, for blowing the whistle on the criminal behaviour of those who are supposed to protect us. People like Chelsea Manning, Jeremy Hammond, Barrett Brown, Peter Sunde, Gottfrid Svartholm, Fredrik Neij, John Kiriakou and Edward Snowden. Jesselyn Radack, Samy Kamkar and Thomas Drake also paid a high price for their principles. While Aaron Swartz paid the ultimate price, taking his own life in January 2013 on the eve of his sentencing.

But there are tools out there for us to use which may free us if we apply them with our collective wisdom.

I am going to tell you a little story about my home-turf, Iceland, a country that many have looked to as a laboratory for a new, more real democracy; a beacon of hope for profound transformation.

Gold-eating (yes, they would sprinkle gold dust on their food) and private jets were idolized in a media owned, incidentally, by the bank proprietors

Democracy laboratory

Iceland is an island in the middle of the North Atlantic, with a population of 320,001. It claims to have the oldest parliamentary democracy in the world, but this is just one of our cute myths. The island was actually a colony of Denmark and Norway for centuries, and has only been an independent democratic republic since 1944.

We suffer from serious nepotism and corruption thrives. Think of Iceland as grand Sicily. Mafia-style overlords known as 'the Octopus' took everything that should belong to the nation and divided it between their families and friends during the transition to independence, like some African countries which declared independence a decade after Iceland.

That might explain why, when the banks were privatized in 2005, stern laws and promises of professionalism were tossed aside and the banks were handed over to bosses who pleased the 'mafia' families.

A 2,330-page report from the Special Investigative Commission, appointed by the parliament to investigate the causes of the financial collapse, revealed, among other shocking things, that in April 2010 the buyers of the banks never really paid for them. They lent each other the down-payments. The national treasury never got the full value.[2]

In addition, Iceland's bankers had found out how to abuse the European Economic Area banking laws to expand into the European Union market and set up sister banks in Europe.[3] The result: Iceland-based banks grew like mushrooms during a moist summer. The Icelandic financial 'wonder' swelled to six times the island's GDP in the space of a few years.

Those financial cowboys claimed we could be *the* financial leaders of the world, a new banking Mecca. Supporters, including Iceland's President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, sold the illusion both at home and abroad. I, for one, never believed in the fairytale, but most of the nation participated in the party, enjoying easy access to loans, while soaring property values helped feed the illusion.

The bubbles – and temptations – were many. Gold-eating (yes, they would sprinkle gold dust on their food) and private jets were idolized in a media owned, incidentally, by the bank proprietors.

The financial meltdown in 2008 forced people to realize that everything in which they had put their trust had failed. As many were confronted with the fact that nothing was as it seemed, thinktanks and grassroots groups began to emerge where people discussed what sort of future they wanted to develop together. How they might create Iceland 2.0 – a New Iceland free from the elements that led to the world's fourth largest financial collapse.

The situation called for soul-searching similar to when individuals are confronted with personal crisis. When an individual is faced with a transformative crisis – for example, a death in the family or a serious illness – the capacity to effect a profound change of course is far greater than during more stable times. The same applies to societies.

When a deep crisis unfolds real changes can be made. A good way to discover the true nature of a society is to open a discussion on what it would like to see reflected in its constitution or 'social agreement'.

Post-crisis, between 2009 and 2013, the people of Iceland had a shot at doing something parliament had never managed during the 70 years since independence. Through a crowdsourcing process they wrote a new constitution by and for the people of Iceland, based on our values today. In a non-binding referendum the new constitution won the approval of 67 per cent of the people.

In the final stages of the process the people put their trust in the parliament. But parliament ignored the people's wishes, failed to ratify the new constitution, and a new Centre-Right coalition that came to power in April 2013 has made it even less likely.

We had more success elsewhere. Lawyer and whistleblower Eva Joly advised on how to bring to justice those responsible for the crisis. The *Landsdomur*, a special court established in 1905 to call parliamentarians to account, was held for the first time ever and in 2012 former Prime Minister Geir Haarde was found guilty of failing

Laszlo Balogh / Reuters

to hold emergency cabinet meetings in the run-up to financial crisis.

We also saw dramatic changes in the local elections. Reykjavik elected a much-loved comedian Jón Gnarr (of the new Best Party) as mayor in 2010. The party pledged to use a direct democracy platform called Better Reykjavik, where people can put their ideas forward. The most popular suggestions are then processed by the city council every month.

The April 2013 general election saw two new parties enter the parliament, Bright Future and The Pirate Party, which I helped co-create. I became a Pirate Party MP.

But the election also brought to power the worst government for as long as I can remember. It has given the people who represent the Octopus – the corrupt old Iceland – a mandate to do whatever they feel is good for the 1%. Thanks to their election victory, achieved by manipulation of people's fears and appeals to narrow self-interest, the silver-spoon leaders are rapidly undoing what Icelanders managed to achieve in the wake of the crisis.

But today people are more willing to accept that they have been conned and protests are starting up again. This time we might get a real (r)evolution; not just an uprising.

Many of the thinktanks are being revitalized and the previous progressive methods are being used to engage the general public in the protests. The most important thing is how to make people aware that if they want to live in a real democracy they need to be part of it, to engage with it. That living in a democracy is work.

It is vital that people start a discussion among their friends and families about what sort of future they want. If we – Icelanders or any citizens of the Earth – do not have a clear vision of where we are heading, we will get nowhere. The élite puppeteers do have a clear roadmap of where they are heading, which enables them to stay several steps ahead of the

New laws to restrict internet freedom through taxation brought thousands onto the streets of Budapest in late 2014.

I now see most of our democracies as one dictatorship with 100 talking-heads on the neck of a corporate monster

99%. I think the lyrics of 'Imagine' by John Lennon are a pretty good roadmap for us.

Safe haven

One of the main reasons I co-created the Iceland Modern Media Initiative (IMMI) in 2010 was to build a new legal standard for the 21st century, not just for Iceland but for any nation or non-governmental organization that wanted to reuse or remix it. IMMI was envisioned and drafted by some of the best brains in the world, who have created transformative 21st century alternatives to the current norms. These include, among others, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, John Perry Barlow (the godfather of IMMI), WikiLeaks, Julian Assange and Daniel Domsheit-Berg, Liquid Feedback, Smári McCarthy, Cryptophone, Chaos Computer Club and Rop Gonggrep.

In her book, *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein illustrates how crises in societies have repeatedly been utilized and harnessed to push through legislation that infringes civil liberties and to amass more centralized state power, protecting self-interest at the cost of public-interest. Our media initiative has been developed to counter this tradition and use crisis as an opportunity to bring about fundamental changes in the best long-term interests of the public.

The Icelandic Modern Media Initiative was unanimously adopted as a parliamentary resolution in June 2010. It tasked the government to create a progressive environment for both the registration and operation of international media and publishing companies, start-up companies, human rights organizations and data centres.

Such changes could strengthen democratic foundations, promote necessary reform and increase transparency. This new policy has already enhanced the nation's reputation abroad

and created many economic and employment opportunities, although many of the necessary changes in law are yet to be made, due to the slow working processes of the ministries.

In order to reflect the global significance of our aims, IMMI became the International Modern Media Institute in 2011. We have the ideal conditions for creating a holistic media policy, within a legal environment that ensures the protection of freedom of expression, the work of investigative journalists and of those, such as whistleblowers, who publish materials of political weight and significance; and to raise awareness of the importance of protecting digital privacy.

The information society has little to offer if the ways of communicating information relevant to the public are constantly under attack. Although some countries have implemented progressive laws in this field, no one country has unified them all to create a safe haven. Iceland has a unique opportunity to take the lead in putting together a solid legal framework. We have cherry-picked the best laws from around the world in order to create a Safe Haven for Bits in Iceland, available for anyone to use.

It has become obvious that all laws relating to data protection and access are global in nature. They need to uphold human rights in the digital era, not only locally, but globally.

The data cloud moves in unpredictable ways over the unified spying frontiers of the 'Five Eyes' – the alliance of intelligence operations involving Australia, Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Britain and the US. Currently there is no shield strong enough to protect our digital persona from such deep and unwarranted probing by mass surveillance.

Legal hacking

Prior to entering parliament, I had two main objectives. One: to involve the public in reshaping Iceland's legal framework, through national referendums; through co-creation of a new constitution; and through making strong legal foundations for a new system.

Two: to transform Iceland into a safe haven for freedom of information, expression and transparency, with a strong focus on privacy as a cornerstone of democracy.

Once elected, I went inside the system, to the heart of it, the legislative assembly, like a hacker, analysing its strengths and weaknesses.

My conclusion is that the rule of law is an illusion: the rules we vote on do not apply to all, and thus there is no rule of law. Laws should be considered universal and the same rule of law should apply to all, not only the 99%.

I now see most of our democracies as one dictatorship with 100 talking-heads on the neck of a corporate monster.

Looking at different models for how to humanize and modernize how we run our societies, I have come to the conclusion that there is currently no one model that fits all.

We need to experiment and study what works for each type of society, depending on the cultural backdrop of each.

Some amazing experiments are now being implemented with success little known to the world at large.

The first seeds of awareness were spread by Buckminster Fuller in his book *No More Secondhand God*, where he talked about direct democracy and telephonic voting as early as 1940. At last, we are at a stage where the technology for direct access to power is simple enough that citizens can start using it to form opinion and enforce political change in a genuine grassroots, bottom-up way.

New types of citizen engagement platforms are being created and used to form policy and participate in direct democracy, such as the Pirate Party Liquid Feedback[4], Your Priorities[5], DemocracyOS[6] and WeGov[7]. There is resistance from those who control the current system but I believe it will be futile because people are creating a shadow form of governance, or rather self-governance. This is happening on the fringes still, but it is moving towards the centre at a steady speed.

We need more studies to see the pros and cons of active voting systems and liquid democracy models, with delegates rather than representatives, for example.

We need to do the opposite of what Russell Brand is advocating, we need to use our votes. Even if we don't want to engage with the current broken system, we should not use that as an excuse for apathy. We should see it as an encouragement to engage in creating our own alternatives, our new co-created systems; to be creative about it and to connect. Connectivity is the key to a rapid change; but information in itself is meaningless if we don't know how to decode it into wisdom. ■

1 archive.org **2** Report of the Special Investigative Commission nin.tl/1lukcQW **3** Special Investigative Commission April 2010 nin.tl/1GekJCl **4** Liquid Feedback Interactive Democracy nin.tl/1lumDTo **5** yrpri.org **6** democracyos.org **7** WeGov.com

The information society has little to offer if the ways of communicating information relevant to the public are constantly under attack

Freedom of expression, rights to information and privacy

International Modern Media Institute (IMMI) en.immi.is
Dedicated to developing havens for freedom of information, speech and expression. It creates supportive legal environments for the publication of investigative journalism and other threatened online media.

Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) eff.org
Leading nonprofit organization defending civil liberties in the digital world.

Electronic Frontiers Australia (EFA) efa.org.au
A non-profit national organization that has been promoting digital freedom, access and privacy in Australia since 1994. Currently running the Citizens Not Suspects campaign against indiscriminate data retention.

The Centre for Internet & Society (CIS) cis-india.org
India-based organization dedicated to improving understanding of the internet and defending consumer and citizen rights on it.

Privacy International privacyinternational.org
Defends and promotes rights to privacy. Has organized more than 50 campaigns around the world.

Tor Project torproject.org
Has developed the Tor encryption tool that provides anonymity online and protects the privacy of the user against network surveillance and traffic analysis.

Access Now accessnow.org
Defends and extends the digital rights of at-risk users around the world.

EDRi edri.org
Brussels-based European Digital Rights advocacy group.

Freedom of the Press Foundation freedom.press
Manages SecureDrop (open-source whistleblower submission system for media), supports encryption, whistleblowing and investigative journalism.

The Netizen Project netizenproject.org
News and information for citizens of the internet. Research into government and corporate policies and practices in relation to free expression and privacy.

Open Rights Group (ORG) openrightsgroup.org
Campaigns to defend digital rights and freedoms and puts journalists in touch with experts.

La Quadrature du Net laquadrature.net
Advocates for French and European legislation to respect the founding principles of the internet, most notably the free circulation of knowledge

The following work to protect media freedom and writers and journalists in general:

International Press Institute freemedia.at

The Committee to Protect Journalists cpj.org

Index on Censorship indexoncensorship.org

Article 19 article19.org

PEN International pen-international.org

Transparency and direct democracy initiatives

Citizens.is citizens.is
Promotes democratic debate and works to increase citizens' participation, online.

DemocracyOS democracyos.org
Created by the Buenos Aires-based Net Democracy Foundation, this is an online platform for debating and voting on political issues. Currently used by groups in Argentina, Mexico and Spain.

Sunlight Foundation sunlightfoundation.com
Advocates for open government globally and creates technology to dramatically expand access to vital government information to make public officials more accountable.

Loomio.org loomio.org
Created in New Zealand/Aotearoa, Loomio is free and open-source software for anyone, anywhere, to participate in decisions that affect them.

The Software Freedom Law Centre softwarefreedom.org
Provides pro-bono legal services to developers of Free, Libre and Open Source Software.

Online activism:

Wikileaks wikileaks.org

Avaaz avaaz.org

The Yes Lab yeslab.org

Sum of us sumofus.org

Anonymous nin.tl/1x5KENh

Pirate Parties

Since the first Pirate Party was created in Sweden in 2006, new parties using the 'Pirate' label have sprung up in 40 countries. Mainly their priorities are civil rights, direct democracy and participation in government; reform of copyright and patent law; free sharing of knowledge, privacy, transparency and network neutrality.

Some Pirate activists have won seats, mainly in local or regional elections. Iceland's Pirate Party is the most successful at national level, winning five per cent of the vote and accounting for three out of a total 63 members of parliament.

Pirate Parties International (pp-international.net) is the umbrella organization of the national parties.

Pirates Without Borders (blog.pirates-without-borders.org) is an international organization of individuals.

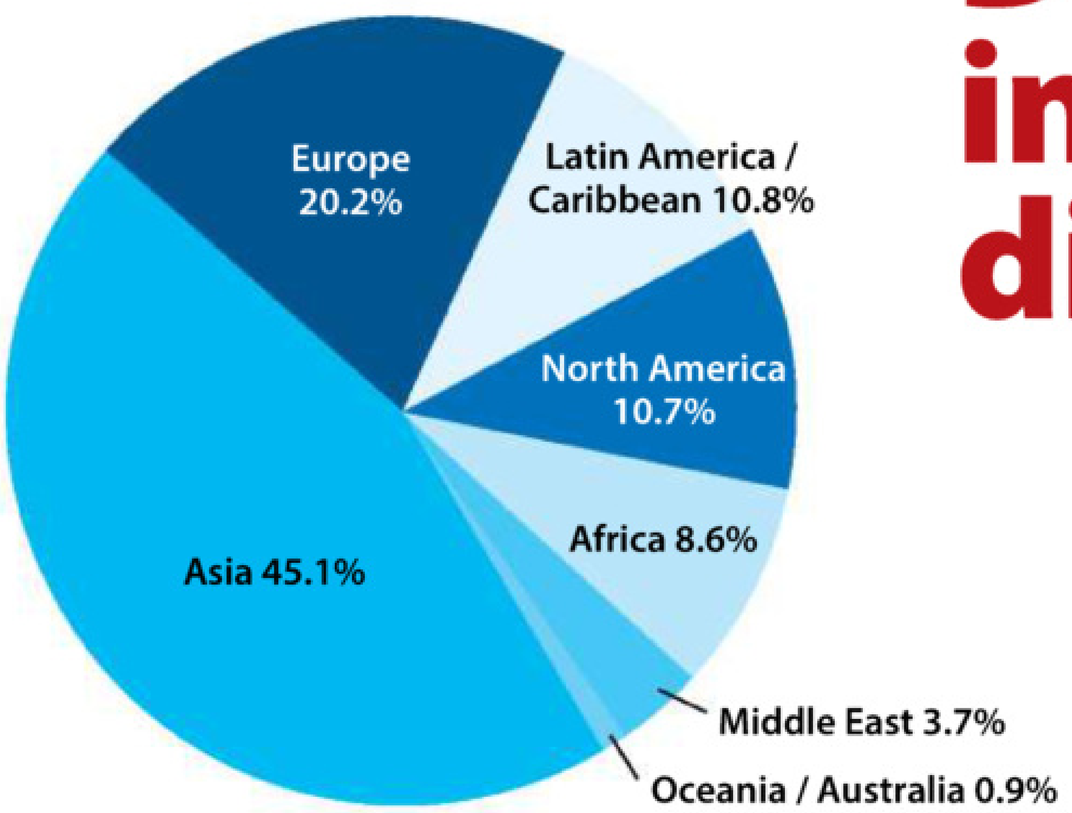
Liquid Democracy

Liquid Democracy – also referred to as Delegative Democracy or Proxy Voting – is a system whereby delegates are vested with voting power. As a tool of Direct Democracy, where issues are decided by referendum, Liquid Democracy allows for the fact that a citizen may lack time or interest to devote to particular issues. Person A might not know much about issue X but might trust person B to vote on their behalf. These delegations can be revoked at any stage. In some systems, delegated voting power can be forwarded, from person B to person C and so on.

This is a major break from representative democracy – or governance – where representatives have only to engage with their constituents during elections, holding the seat of power for a pre-determined time. As we transition from a traditional representative system, liquid democracy strategies can be adopted by the old system, decentralizing power further, and paving the way for a stronger direct democracy system.

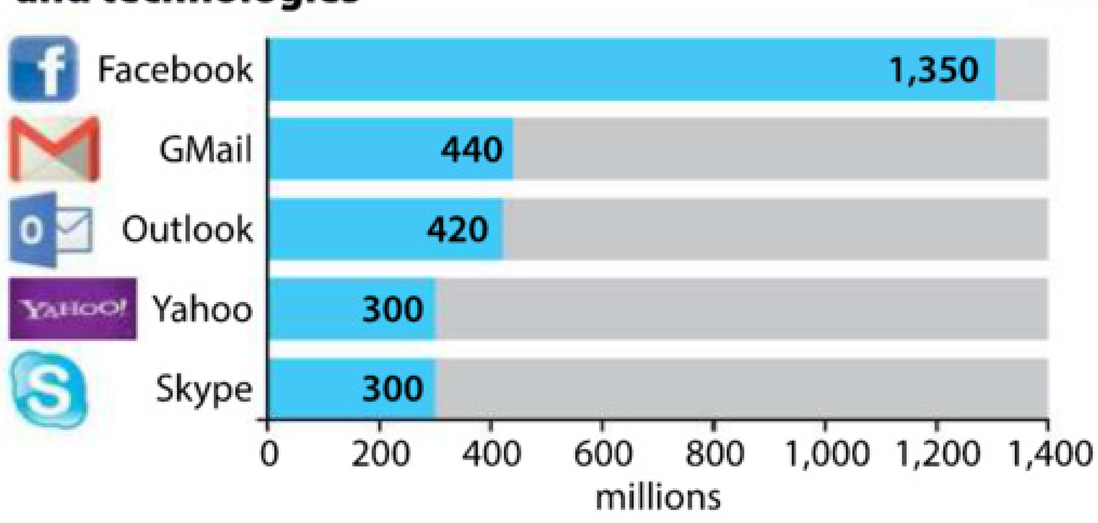
INTERNET

There are 3 billion internet users in the world – 8 times more than in 2000[1]



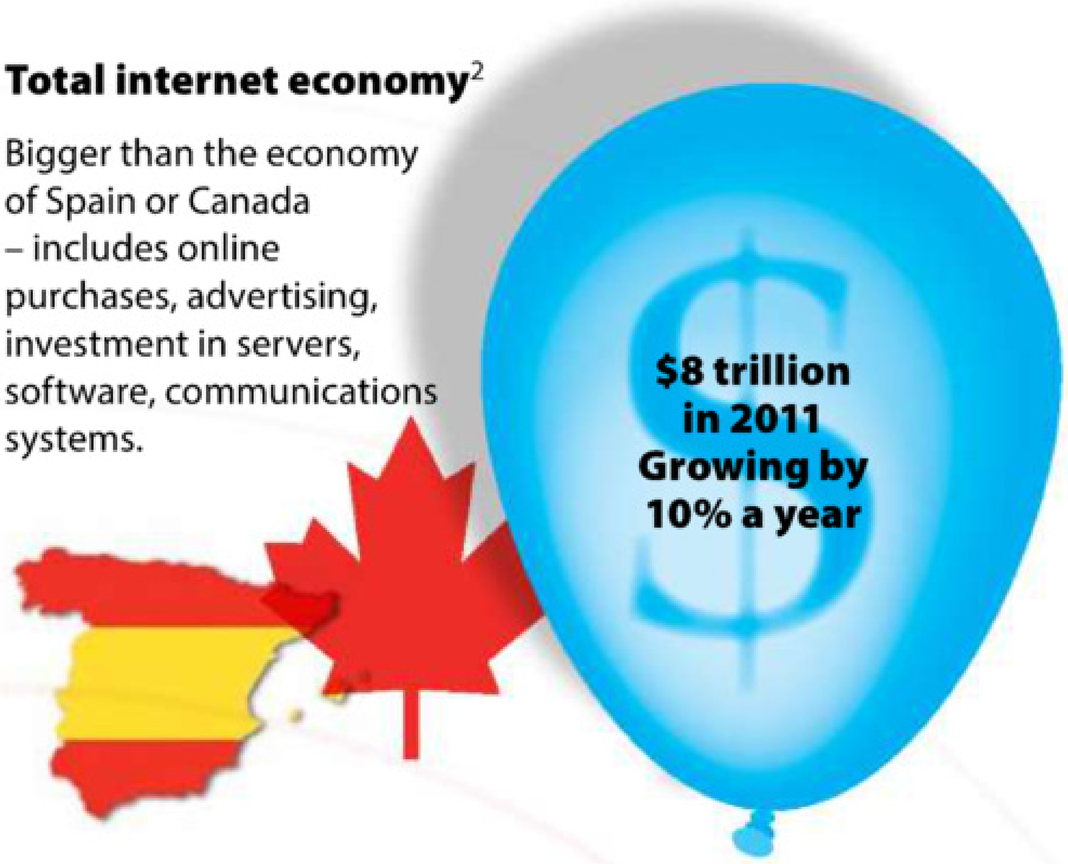
THE FACTS
Democracy in the digital era

Users of large internet services and technologies[3]

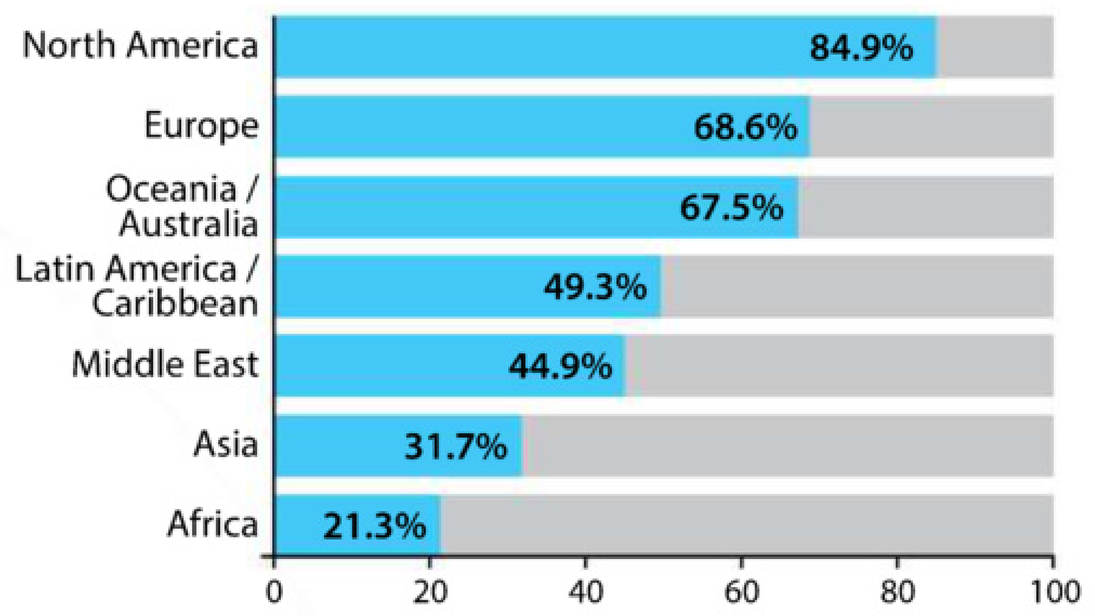


Total internet economy[2]

Bigger than the economy of Spain or Canada – includes online purchases, advertising, investment in servers, software, communications systems.



Percentage of population that have internet coverage (internet penetration rates)



LAWS and CONVENTIONS

Protection:

- Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says – *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom… to receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.* In 2012 an extension to include online media was adopted by 47 countries including China and Russia.

Threats:

- Australia's proposed Data Retention Bill would compel telecommunication companies to retain for a minimum of 2 years the metadata of every subscriber in Australia.[15]
- New counterterrorism laws going through the Australian parliament mean that journalists could face 10 years' jail for exposing security agency bungles.[16]
- In Britain the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Bill, rushed through parliament without proper scrutiny in July 2014, will violate the privacy of citizens and compromise journalistic duty to protect confidential sources.[17]
- Russia has passed a series of new laws which compel bloggers with 3,000 or more daily readers to register with the government, and make retweeting of 'extremist' views punishable by 5 years in jail.[18]

24,344GB data transferred per second

2,400,000 emails sent every second

MASS SURVEILLANCE

$120 billion – estimated total annual surveillance budget for the 'Five Eyes' (alliance of intelligence operations of Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand/ Aotearoa, US)[6]

$54 billion – annual surveillance budget of the US Director of National Intelligence[6]

$0.13 per person per day – surveillance cost per internet user[6]

20%↑ – year-on-year increase in Australian state access to private data, without warrant[7]

36% of all raw information intercepted by Britain's GCHQ was passed on to the US's NSA[8]

24 – US mass surveillance programmes currently running (including Prism)[9]

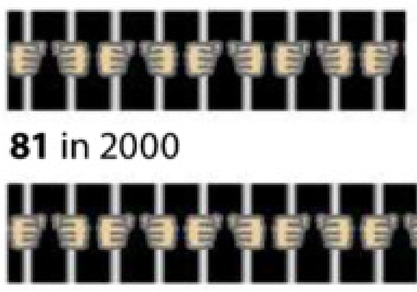
2 million – the reported size of China's internet police force in 2013[10]

$110,000 – the bounty Russian authorities are offering for anyone able to crack the Tor anonymity network.[11]

MEDIA FREEDOM

What happens to media practitioners is one way of measuring what's happening to press freedom.

Journalists in prison: [12]



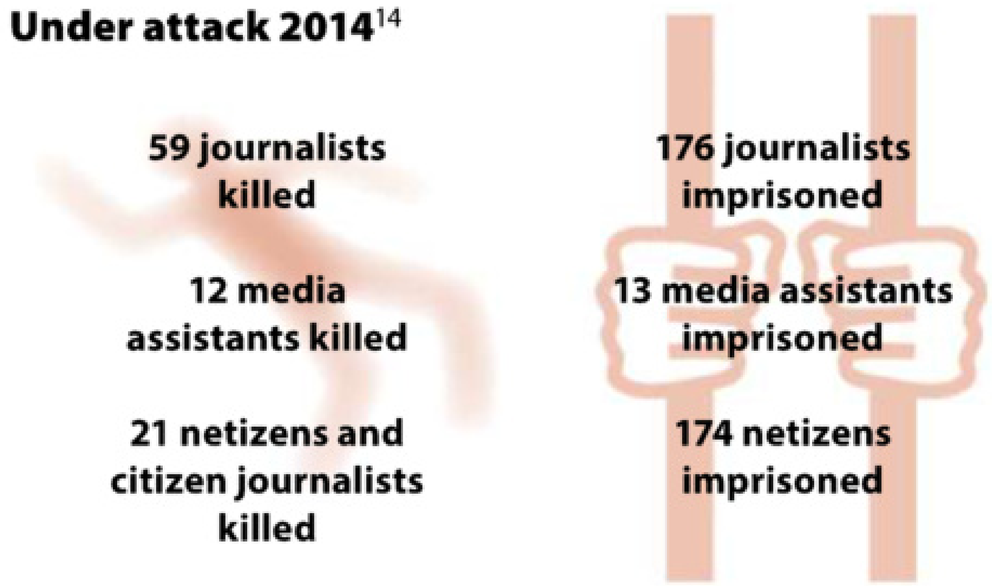
81 in 2000

211 in 2013

Countries with most imprisoned journalists in 2013:[13]

40	35	32	22	18	12
Turkey	Iran	China	Eritrea	Vietnam	Syria

Under attack 2014[14]



CENSORSHIP

Top 10 internet censored countries (2014)[4]

Golden Shield

China has the most sophisticated content-filtering internet regime in the world. Golden Shield blocks destination IP addresses and domain names and also inspects the data being sent or received. [5]

1 Internet World Stats.com nin.tl/1vRGGaU **2** The Atlantic.com nin.tl/1HKZiN0 **3** Statistica.com nin.tl/1zzF9na **4** Committee to Protect Journalists report nin.tl/12aT6N7 **5** Wikipedia nin.tl/1HL2qlE **6** Smari McCarthy nin.tl/12b5pJp **7** nin.tl/1HL6zwm **8** Privacy International nin.tl/12b5PPO accessed 1/11/2014 **9** Wikipedia nin.tl/1HL6NUd **10** BBC, 'China employs two million microblog monitors state media say,' nin.tl/12b6Qrh **11** Russia Today nin.tl/12b7k0B **12** Global Voices nin.tl/1HL7ixl **13** Committee for Protection of Journalists nin.tl/12b83ie **14** Reporters Without Borders nin.tl/12b8IAr Figures are for Jan-Nov **15** *Green Left Weekly* 15 Nov 2014 nin.tl/12b9f59 **16** ABC nin.tl/1HL81yy **17** International Federation of Journalists nin.tl/12b9VaR **18** Global Voices nin.tl/1HL8h0x

Netizens are more interested in talking than listening, argues Micah L Sifry, which has important consequences for the way the internet impacts on politics.

The internet has been hailed the greatest communications platform ever invented for the expansion of democracy.

To be sure, in countries where internet use is relatively unhindered, there is far greater freedom of expression than in the days when just a few gatekeepers decided what was news. And in more authoritarian countries peer-to-peer technologies like the internet provide a vital outlet for dissent.

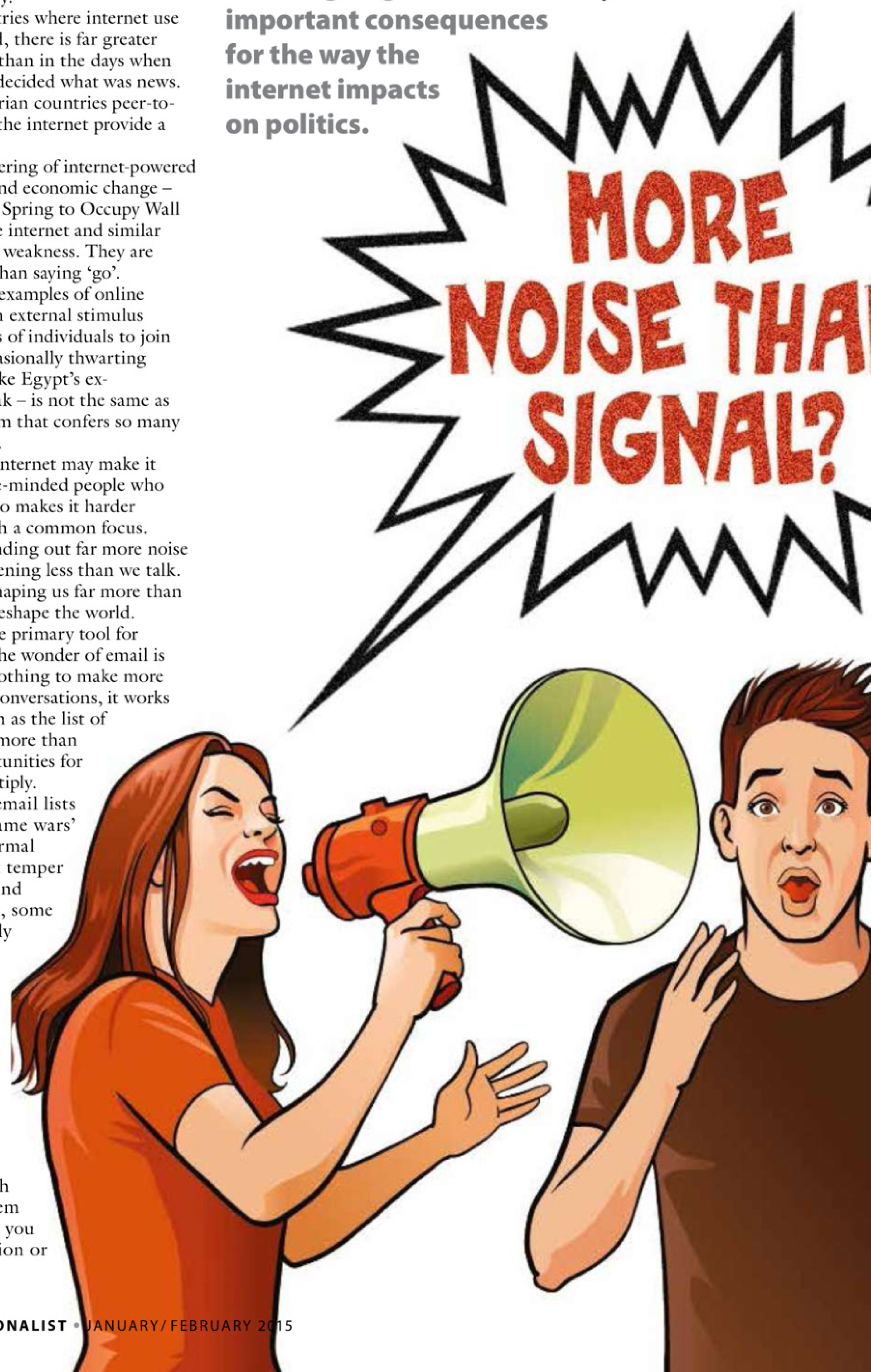
But despite the flowering of internet-powered movements for social and economic change – ranging from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street – the truth is the internet and similar tools have a worrisome weakness. They are better at saying 'stop' than saying 'go'.

In most of the best examples of online political organizing, an external stimulus prompts large numbers of individuals to join in opposition. But occasionally thwarting powerful overlords – like Egypt's ex-dictator Hosni Mubarak – is not the same as transforming the system that confers so many advantages upon them.

It's a paradox. The internet may make it easier to find other like-minded people who share a cause, but it also makes it harder for people to bond with a common focus. Collectively, we are sending out far more noise than signal; we are listening less than we talk. Our digital tools are shaping us far more than we are using them to reshape the world.

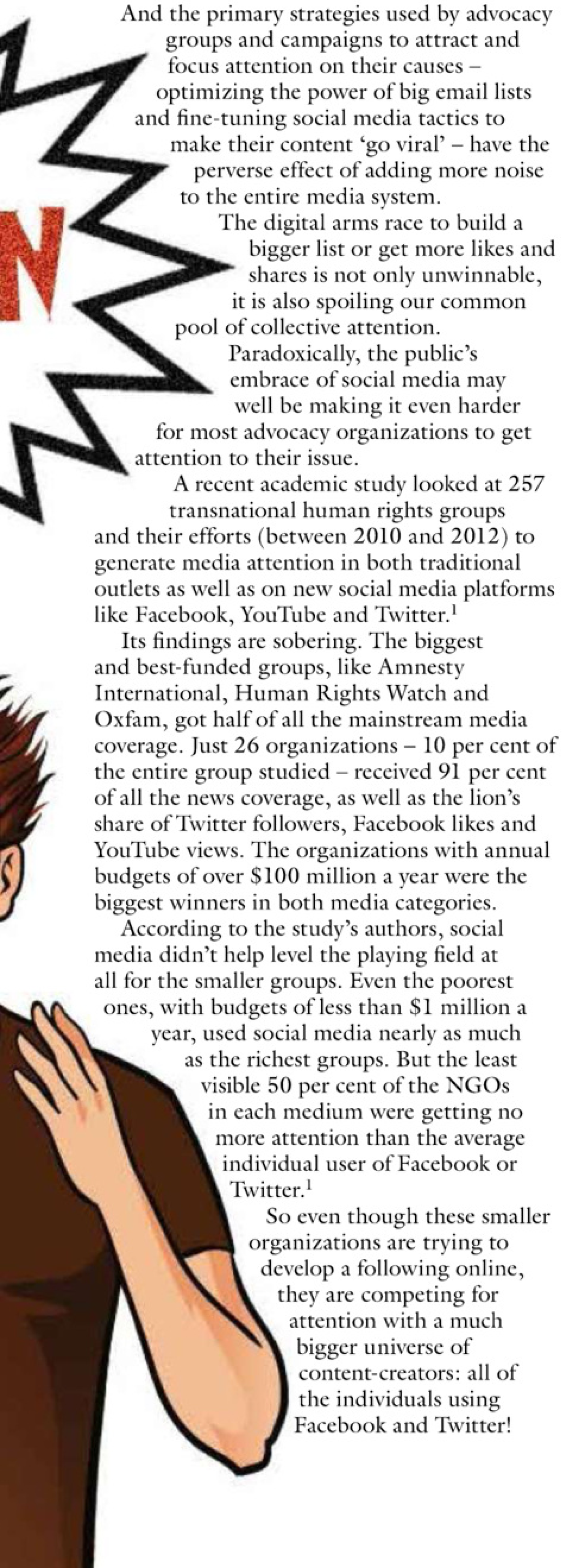
Take email – still the primary tool for political organizing. The wonder of email is that it costs (almost) nothing to make more of it. For one-on-one conversations, it works beautifully. But as soon as the list of recipients increases to more than one person, the opportunities for misunderstanding multiply.

All un-moderated email lists inevitably result in 'flame wars' where, lacking the normal visual cues that might temper emotional responses and dampen disagreement, some people end up viciously attacking each other. Even moderated lists often turn ugly. As a result, arguably the best use of email is to be the owner of a big list where you are writing directly to many atomized individuals who can't respond or talk to each other, but some of them will click on a request you make – to sign a petition or make a donation.



Vazja Koman / Getty Images

The tools we have for actually getting things done together, as opposed to protesting and attacking others, are woefully thin. Email lists, listservs, wikis, blogs and social media are used by billions of people and are great at enabling self-expression; but they're terrible at helping us collaborate in making decisions and reaching consensus.



And the primary strategies used by advocacy groups and campaigns to attract and focus attention on their causes – optimizing the power of big email lists and fine-tuning social media tactics to make their content 'go viral' – have the perverse effect of adding more noise to the entire media system.

The digital arms race to build a bigger list or get more likes and shares is not only unwinnable, it is also spoiling our common pool of collective attention.

Paradoxically, the public's embrace of social media may well be making it even harder for most advocacy organizations to get attention to their issue.

A recent academic study looked at 257 transnational human rights groups and their efforts (between 2010 and 2012) to generate media attention in both traditional outlets as well as on new social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.[1]

Its findings are sobering. The biggest and best-funded groups, like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam, got half of all the mainstream media coverage. Just 26 organizations – 10 per cent of the entire group studied – received 91 per cent of all the news coverage, as well as the lion's share of Twitter followers, Facebook likes and YouTube views. The organizations with annual budgets of over $100 million a year were the biggest winners in both media categories.

According to the study's authors, social media didn't help level the playing field at all for the smaller groups. Even the poorest ones, with budgets of less than $1 million a year, used social media nearly as much as the richest groups. But the least visible 50 per cent of the NGOs in each medium were getting no more attention than the average individual user of Facebook or Twitter.[1]

So even though these smaller organizations are trying to develop a following online, they are competing for attention with a much bigger universe of content-creators: all of the individuals using Facebook and Twitter!

The digital arms race to build a bigger list or get more likes and shares is not only unwinnable, it is also spoiling our common pool of collective attention

There is only a limited amount of attention that can be paid by an audience to what is happening in the world. Increasing the number of people speaking and sharing content doesn't lead to more attention to that content – it leads to greater fragmentation.

What is to be done? We must remember that the purpose of democracy isn't only for each of us to have our say, but to blend individual opinions into common agreements. Instead of letting our digital tools drive us in ways that exacerbate our differences, we must insist on tools that bring us together as equals to solve problems. Interestingly, the internet's own early engineers understood this challenge very well. 'We reject: kings, presidents and voting,' said David Clark at the 1992 meeting of the Internet Engineering Task Force. 'We believe in: rough consensus and running code.' His words are as relevant today as they were then.

The good news is that it is possible to make the internet work for democracy. Online community hubs focused on solving real-life problems exist, and in some places they're hitting critical mass and changing the culture of the places they serve.

Behaviour change

See, for example, SeeClickFix.com, a six-year-old civic tech platform now being used in more than 100 cities across the US. While new, easy-to-use group decision-making tools like Loomio.org can enable hundreds of people to deliberate together, even when separated by space and time. At last count Loomio (which originated in Aotearoa/New Zealand) has been translated into 24 languages and is powering new political movements in Greece, the Balkans, Spain and Taiwan. The future impact of the internet on politics may well be different from the one now being charted.

If we want, we can bend technology to serve the end of a more participatory democracy, to start building the institutions of the future. We can achieve a much greater level of collective self-awareness and self-governance. We can transform the partial, opaque and manipulated forms of democracy and participation that we experience today. But to get there we also have to change our own behaviour and the expectations we place on the technologies that shape our daily lives. ■

Micah L Sifry is the editorial director of Personal Democracy Media and the author, most recently, of *The Big Disconnect: Why the Internet Hasn't Transformed Politics (Yet)*, from which this piece is partially adapted. He can be found at personaldemocracy.com and his book can be ordered from orbooks.com/catalog/big-disconnect/

1 A Trevor Thrall et al, 'May We Have Your Attention Please? Human Rights NGOs and the Problem of Global Communication', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 26 January 2014.

Dreams of freedom, dreams of domination

Jillian C York on how cyberspace got colonized – and the struggle ahead to liberate it.

When, a decade ago, the term Web 2.0 entered our lexicon, we were still collectively dreaming of a vision of cyberspace where no government dared enter, a cyberspace 'naturally independent of the tyrannies' of regulation and law enforcement.[1] This space, as we imagined it, would be the great equalizer, opening up closed societies and connecting us with kindred spirits the world over.

These dreams combined with the dreams of Silicon Valley magnates to create large-scale centralized platforms where all could gather. Within two years of the popularization of Web 2.0, we could look up our friends on Facebook, post our creative endeavours to YouTube, and Tweet whatever we were thinking. These slick corporate platforms rapidly replaced the spaces where we'd previously gathered, promising in bright colours a 'free' product with features beyond our wildest imaginations.

Today, these are truly global platforms. They are centralized, free and easy to use, and as such, attracting masses from around the globe who utilize them both as they were intended and marketed – to connect with friends and share information. And in ways less planned – to engage in political discourse, organize protests and, more nefariously, to harass, intimidate and recruit people into various causes.

These global platforms have in many ways taken on the role of the public sphere (as described by Habermas: 'Society engaged in critical public debate').Yet they remain private spaces, with users bound to the whims of their billionaire owners and shareholders. The rules and regulations that govern these spaces respect no laws, apart from those by which they are legally bound.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promises the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to receive and impart information and ideas 'through any media and regardless of frontiers'. Surveillance and censorship imposed on the greater internet by governments have compromised this promise, but challenges to these infringements on civil liberties remain possible through the law.

'Civilizing' cyberspace?

Not so for privately governed spaces, which operate without the consent of the networked, as scholar Rebecca MacKinnon has described it.[2] Instead, users are made to be arbiters of speech, handed tools for flagging problematic content under rules created by oligarchic leaders. These leaders are, by and large, wealthy, white, American and male.[3] The impact of their demographic make-up on the systems that they build and the rules by which they expect users to abide should not be underestimated. Where nudity is banned, violence is okay. Hate speech against women abounds, but political speech is at times censored. Celebrities are given special dispensation with verified accounts and dedicated phone lines, while average users are sometimes unable to appeal when their accounts or content are taken away.

Robert Galbraith/Reuters

Booted off Facebook: Californian drag-queen Heklina protests against Facebook's 'real names' policy in November 2014.

Tread softly in cyberspace

Dunja Mijatović on why internet security requires a light touch.

The digital age requires a new way of thinking about security. The threats we face today seem to be unprecedented. Security challenges are global and more catastrophic than ever. The world is less stable and predictable. We must acknowledge that we are probably looking for more security than is attainable and that effective and proportionate laws to deal with security issues are needed.

That said, regulating the internet requires treading lightly, lest governments over-regulate and stifle the very freedoms they aim to protect. Governments and societies should be aware that there is nothing which might justify the erosion of certain basic principles and rights which form the bedrock of modern democracies.

Cybersecurity laws should not be misapplied or abused so that they hinder the work of journalists and suppress free media and the right of free expression. The words of John Locke come to mind: 'The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states of created beings capable of law, where there is no law, there is no freedom.'

To make matters more complex, the exercise of democratic rights online, including freedom of expression and freedom of the media, mostly depends on the decisions made by private network owners and service providers. Big portals, search engines and technology manufacturers directly intervene in circulation, distribution and access to content and ideas on new platforms. They have become the main gatekeepers of the digital world. In many cases the effectiveness of so-called internet freedom will be in their hands.

No-one can claim that regulation is an easy task. Still, we could use one very easy rule when this issue is approached: those who govern least govern best. Any regulatory or legislative measures must be decided upon with the backing of all stakeholders. Civil society, governments and businesses should all work together to safeguard user control, choice and privacy.

Media freedom and freedom of expression are cornerstones of any healthy democracy and of paramount importance to all of us. The right to speak our minds and for journalists to do their work freely and safely must be safeguarded – offline and online.

Ultimately, it is important to treat media freedom – and with it internet freedom – for what it really is: a strong test of democracy. To understand fully the importance of free media, one simply needs to examine what happens in a place without it. ■

Dunja Mijatović is the Representative on Freedom of the Media for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Flagging – or community report – can be in and of itself a way of silencing speech. Scholars Kate Crawford and Tarleton Gillespie argued in a recent paper that flagging 'act[s] as a mechanism to elicit and distribute user labor – users as a volunteer corps of regulators'.[4] While in theory this allows for users of social platforms to report harassment, impersonation, or other potential harms, in practice it also allows for misuse.

In recent months, a number of drag performers found themselves unceremoniously kicked off Facebook, forced to choose between submitting legal identification and changing their accounts to reflect their legal or birth names; or leave the site – and their networks and followers – behind.[5] Facebook's policy requiring 'real names' may be an aberration in the sphere of the social web, but it is nonetheless representative of a larger problem. The policy is couched in the language of harm prevention, described as a mechanism of protection, but is ultimately – like numerous other policies imposed by corporations on users – an attempt to 'civilize' online spaces.

But just as, historically, civilizing missions by Western countries have been used as pretence for colonization, so is the mission of private companies to 'civilize' the social web an attempt to colonize the internet, to make the public sphere a place for 'respectable' commentary. This is accomplished by circumventing the laws meant to govern speech with private codes, by giving internet users the false choice of engaging with the network or being left behind, by selling the idea of 'free' spaces purchased with private data that, once given, cannot be taken back.

The real options that remain for those who wish for truly free online spaces are to engage in actions that ensure our voices are heard by corporate powers, to build new spaces that are decentralized and inherently open, and to continue the fight to ensure that all of the internet, corporate or not, remains the space for free expression that we dreamed it to be.

In order to do this, we must first recognize the ongoing shift from government to corporate regulation and address it accordingly. Corporate online spaces work to obfuscate their own role as censors, using transparency as a mechanism to divert attention to governments as the sole infringers on expression. Once we have recognized this role, we will be able to stand up against these corporate powers and demand better… or we can make the choice to walk away. ■

Jillian C York is the *Electronic Frontier Foundation*'s director for International Freedom of Expression at jilliancyork.com

1 John Perry Barlow, 'A declaration of the independence of cyberspace', 8 February 1996; nin.tl/1z9gVAa **2** Rebecca MacKinnon, *Consent of the Networked*, book available from consentofthenetworked.com **3** Maxine Williams, 'Building a more diverse facebook', f newsroom, 25 June 2014; nin.tl/1tzfRBM **4** 'What is a flag for?', *Sage* journals, 15 July 2014; nin.tl/1yemZcd **5** Caitlin Dewey, 'Why the debate over real names matters', *The Washington Post*, 6 October 2014; nin.tl/1tzjebZ

Everywhere in chains

Illustration: Belle Mellor

Investigative journalist Nick Davies unpicks the myth of press freedom in Britain.

The British press was born free but it is everywhere in chains. Some of those chains are financial. As the internet takes away our readers and advertisers, news organizations struggle to find the money to pay for basic news gathering and even more so for long, complicated investigations. Instead, they lapse into recycling PR and propaganda served up in neat packages by governments and corporations.

Other chains are political. In every limb of the British state, the activity of the public sector is concealed by a blanket of official secrecy which is enforced by politicians and which means quite simply that civil servants, police officers, care workers and others are banned from talking to reporters. We are expected to take our information from their press officers.

But the tightest chains are legal. That culture of official secrecy is reinforced by an Official Secrets Act which can be wheeled out to prosecute whistleblowers from the state. David Shayler, for example, worked for the internal security service, MI5, and went to a journalist to expose incompetence in its operations against IRA terrorists. He was chased across Europe, jailed in Paris, brought back to London and jailed again. The message to other whistleblowers was chilling and clear.

If the British criminal law can be harsh, the civil law can be even more oppressive. When Julian Assange and I first agreed to set up the alliance of newspapers which published the secrets which had been given to Wikileaks by Chelsea Manning, we immediately decided to involve *The New York Times* as a kind of escape route from the British courts. The US courts generally will not allow 'prior restraint' of material which news organizations intend to publish. In London, by contrast, it was clear that the US could go to court, use the magic words 'national security' and obtain an order to prevent the *Guardian* or any other British outlet from publishing.

Similarly, when representatives of British intelligence indicated that they were going to come to the *Guardian's* office to physically destroy laptops on which we had stored some of the material which we had been given by Edward Snowden, the editor, Alan Rusbridger, took the precaution of ensuring that *The New York Times* had a copy of the material.

Britain is globally famous for its libel laws. They are almost useless for most genuine victims of media aggression because they are so insanely expensive to enforce. But they are highly effective instruments of suppression for the rich and powerful who can afford them. Crucially, they mean that it is not enough for British reporters to publish the truth: they also have to be able to prove it in open court, which is out of bounds for the kind of off-the-record sources who so often provide the most important information. And if a British reporter happens to make a mistake, he or she can expect to be punished with hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of legal costs and damages.

Our contempt of court laws are equally restrictive. I became a reporter because of the Watergate scandal, which began with the arrest of burglars inside the Democrat party's office. In the US, their brief appearance in court the next day gave reporters a way into the story. In Britain, it would have closed the story down: we're in contempt of court if we publish anything that could prejudice an upcoming trial.

All whistleblowers take risks. In Britain, those risks are particularly clear. Those who succeed tend to do so by seeing their role as a political one and coming out openly at some point so that they can become the focal point for a political campaign which can succeed (sometimes) in persuading the state not to wrap them in the legal chains which are so readily available. ■

Nick Davies is an award-winning investigative journalist and documentary maker. His most recent book, *Hack Attack: How the Truth Caught Up with Rupert Murdoch*, was published in August 2014.

Privacy vs transparency

After the Snowden affair, the rise of social media and the sharing economy, some corporations and governments would like us to believe that 'privacy is dead'. Privacy should not and cannot be dead as that would mean that security is also dead. It is technically impossible to construct a secure information system without privacy as a precondition. And, conversely, it is impossible to guarantee privacy without security as a precondition.

The right to privacy has been articulated in international law and in some national laws. The right to transparency – freedom of information – while unavailable in international law has increasingly become encoded in national laws as a means of holding governments to account and tackling the imbalance of power between states and citizens.

Independent and autonomous transparency regulators have been established. Corporations as well as state bodies are required to be more open. India's 2013 Companies Act, for example, requires transparency from the private sector. Accompanying the rise of open data has been the growth of the Open Access and the citizen science movement.

So the question is: are these two rights – the right to transparency and the right to privacy – incompatible? Do we have to sacrifice one right to enforce the other? Unfortunately, many privacy and transparency activists think this is the case.

I suggest that these rights are completely compatible if you address the question of power. These rights do not have to be balanced against one another. Privacy protections must be inversely proportionate to power and, as Julian Assange says, transparency requirements should be directly proportionate to power.[1]

In most privacy laws, the public interest is an exception to privacy. If public interest is being undermined, then an individual's privacy can be infringed upon by the state, by researchers, by the media, and so on. In transparency law, if the privacy of an individual could be infringed, transparency would not be required unless it is in the public interest. In other words, the 'public interest' test allows us to use privacy law and transparency law to address power asymmetries rather than exacerbate them.

Can you have both? Yes, writes Sunil Abraham.

Around 10 years ago, the transparency movement gave birth to the open government data movement. The tension between privacy and transparency is most clearly seen here. The open government data movement in some parts of the world is dominated by ahistorical and apolitical technologists, and some of them seem intent on reinventing the wheel. In India, ever since the enactment of the Right to Information Act 2003, every year around 30 transparency activists are either killed, beaten or criminally intimidated. This figure is from media coverage alone. Many more suffer in silence. Transparency is without a doubt one of the most dangerous sectors within Indian civil society that you could choose to work in. In contrast, not a single open data activist has ever been killed, beaten or criminally intimidated. I suspect this is because open data activists do not sufficiently challenge power hierarchies.

When a traditional transparency activist asks a question, that is usually enough to get them into trouble. When an open data activist publishes an answer – a dataset nicely scrubbed and machine readable, or a visualization, or a tool – they are often frustrated because nobody seems interested in using it. Often even the

Mansi Thapliyal/Reuters

A villager has her eyes scanned for India's massive biometric ID programme.

There is no public interest in reducing privacy for the powerless – but huge benefits in increasing transparency of the powerful

activist is unclear what the question is. This is because open data activists work where data is available and are obsessed with big datasets, which are easier to find at the bottom of the pyramid. They seem obsessed only with tools and technologies, rather than power asymmetries and injustices.

Finally, a case study to make my argument easier to understand. Aadhaar or UID is India's ambitious centralized biometric identity and authentication management system. In its current avatar, the Aadhaar project hopes to assign biometric-based identities to all citizens. The hope is that corruption within India's massive subsidy programmes will be reduced. This, in my view, might marginally reduce retail corruption at the bottom of the pyramid. It will do nothing to address wholesale corruption that occurs as subsidies travel from the top to the bottom of the pyramid.

I have advocated over the last two years that we should abandon trying to issue biometric identities to all citizens to make them more transparent to the state. Let us instead issue Aadhaar numbers to all politicians and bureaucrats and make the state more transparent to citizens. There is no public interest in reducing privacy for ordinary citizens – the powerless – but there are huge public interest benefits to be secured by increasing transparency of politicians and bureaucrats, who are the powerful.

The Indian government recently introduced a biometric-based attendance system for all bureaucrats and a portal that allows Indian citizens to track if their bureaucrats are arriving late or leaving early. This unfortunately is just bean counting – being corrupt and being punctual are not mutually exclusive. What bureaucrats do in office, who they meet, and which documents they process, is more important.

Instead of primarily going after small-ticket corruption at the bottom of the pyramid, maximization of public interest requires us to focus on the top. For example: constructing a digital signature based on audit trails that track all funds and subsidies as they move up and down the pyramid. These audit trails must be made public so that ordinary villagers can be supported by open data activists, journalists and others.

I hope open data activists, data scientists, and big data experts will draw inspiration from the transparency movement in India. I hope they will turn their attention to power, examine power asymmetries and then ask how the Aadhaar project can be leveraged to make India more rather than less equal. ■

Sunil Abraham is the executive director of the Centre for Internet and Society based in Bangalore.

1 Yochai Benkler, 'The real significance of wikileaks', *The American Prospect*, 10 May 2011; nin.tl/1ui2arv

Mind your own business

The push-back against Orwellian mass surveillance has begun. Eric King reports from the frontline.

Brian Jackson/Alamy

Spies, of course, have always spied, but the era we live in sees the agencies at their most powerful.

When Britain's GCHQ was established after the First World War private documents were stored in filing cabinets under lock and key and international phone calls were a thing of the future. Now, private documents are kept in unknown data centres around the world, international communications are conducted daily, and our lives are lived online.

The potential of these technological changes has not gone unnoticed. A leaked US National Security Agency strategy document reads:

'Digital information created since 2006 grew tenfold [by 2011]… a trend projected to continue; ubiquitous computing is fundamentally changing how people interact as individuals… and the traces individuals leave when they interact with the global network will define the capacity to locate, characterize and understand entities.'

Operating in the shadows and misleading the public, the spying agencies boast in secret how they 'have adapted in innovative and creative ways' that have led some to describe the current day as 'the golden age of SIGINT'– or 'signals intelligence'.

Remember that the next time intelligence agencies call for greater powers or when you read about law enforcement 'going dark' and losing the access it once had.

There are things citizens can do, though. We can encrypt our email using free open source tools like GPG, our phone calls using apps like Signal and our text messages with TextSecure from Whisper Systems, making mass passive surveillance that much harder. But for long-lasting meaningful change, the policies and practices of the agencies must change too.

Mass, indiscriminate surveillance violates the essence of the fundamental human right to privacy. Thanks to Edward Snowden we now are able to fight back. Litigation brought by Privacy International and others has forced the British government to reveal its secret policies, for the first time allowing us to challenge its practices in court.

These are just the first steps in what must be a global push-back. Intelligence agencies have existed shielded from the scrutiny of the public for too long. They must be brought under the rule of law. ■

Eric King is deputy director of Privacy International privacyinternational.org

A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace

This visionary 1996 statement by John Perry Barlow continues to inspire internet and freedom of expression activists the world over.

Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.

We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us, nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear.

Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. You have neither solicited nor received ours. We did not invite you. You do not know us, nor do you know our world. Cyberspace does not lie within your borders. Do not think that you can build it, as though it were a public construction project. You cannot. It is an act of nature and it grows itself through our collective actions.

You have not engaged in our great and gathering conversation, nor did you create the wealth of our marketplaces. You do not know our culture, our ethics, or the unwritten codes that already provide our society more order than could be obtained by any of your impositions.

You claim there are problems among us that you need to solve. You use this claim as an excuse to invade our precincts. Many of these problems don't exist. Where there are real conflicts, where there are wrongs, we will identify them and address them by our means. We are forming our own Social Contract. This governance will arise according to the conditions of our world, not yours. Our world is different.

Cyberspace consists of transactions, relationships, and thought itself, arrayed like a standing wave in the web of our communications. Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live.

We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth.

We are creating a world where anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity.

Your legal concepts of property, expression, identity, movement, and context do not apply to us. They are all based on matter, and there is no matter here.

Our identities have no bodies, so, unlike you, we cannot obtain order by physical coercion. We believe that from ethics, enlightened self-interest, and the commonweal, our governance will emerge. Our identities may be distributed across many of your jurisdictions. The only law that all our constituent cultures would generally recognize is the Golden Rule. We hope we will be able to build our particular solutions on that basis. But we cannot accept the solutions you are attempting to impose.

You are terrified of your own children, since they are natives in a world where you will always be immigrants. Because you fear them, you entrust your bureaucracies with the parental responsibilities you are too cowardly to confront yourselves. In our world, all the sentiments and expressions of humanity, from the debasing to the angelic, are parts of a seamless whole, the global conversation of bits. We cannot separate the air that chokes from the air upon which wings beat.

In China, Germany, France, Russia, Singapore, Italy and the United States, you are trying to ward off the virus of liberty by erecting guard posts at the frontiers of Cyberspace. These may keep out the contagion for a small time, but they will not work in a world that will soon be blanketed in bit-bearing media.

Your increasingly obsolete information industries would perpetuate themselves by proposing laws, in America and elsewhere, that claim to own speech itself throughout the world. These laws would declare ideas to be another industrial product, no more noble than pig iron. In our world, whatever the human mind may create can be reproduced and distributed infinitely at no cost. The global conveyance of thought no longer requires your factories to accomplish.

These increasingly hostile and colonial measures place us in the same position as those previous lovers of freedom and self-determination who had to reject the authorities of distant, uninformed powers. We must declare our virtual selves immune to your sovereignty, even as we continue to consent to your rule over our bodies. We will spread ourselves across the Planet so that no-one can arrest our thoughts.

We will create a civilization of the Mind in Cyberspace. May it be more humane and fair than the world your governments have made before.

Davos, Switzerland
February 8, 1996
This version is very slightly abridged. See nin.tl/1z9gVAa for the original.

THE UNREPORTED YEAR

Stories that didn't make the mainstream media in 2014

AFRICA

(Above) **NAMIBIA:** Single mother Gertrude Christ stands in front of the corrugated iron shack she shares with her two children in Rehoboth, Namibia. The southern African country has the second-highest housing inflation rate in the world, after Dubai, growing at 29 per cent a year. This places properties beyond the reach of the majority of the population, whose incomes would have to treble before they could afford to buy a home, and has raised concerns that the capital, Windhoek, could become Africa's next slum city. Photo: Karel Prinsloo/Africa Media Online

(Left) **BURKINA FASO:** Anti-government protesters take over the parliament building in the capital, Ouagadougou. Thousands marched on the presidential palace on 30 October, forcing President Blaise Compaoré to scrap a plan to extend his 27-year rule via constitutional change. With elections due in 2015, interim president Michel Kafando has made peaceful overtures, insisting that all factions must work together 'to make our mission a success'. But Kafando, who was the army's candidate of choice for the interim position, is unpopular with many of the protesters, who fear that genuine democracy may continue to elude them. Photo: Joe Penney/Reuters

The Unreported Year is compiled by **Jo Lateu** and **Jess Worth**.

SOUTH EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

(Above) **CHINA:** A family of migrant construction workers dines in their housing compound. Looming behind them are the smoke stacks of the Datong No 2 coal-fired power plant, where some of them work. A report in June by Greenpeace China warned that the country's plans to build 50 new coal-to-gas plants over the next decade could add more than a billion cubic metres of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. Environmentalists are pinning their hopes on a government announcement, also in June, that it would set an absolute cap on its CO_2 emissions from 2016. Photo: Adam Dean/Panos

(Left) **CAMBODIA/THAILAND:** Cambodian workers get a lift in army trucks as they make their way home following their flight from neighbouring Thailand. A military coup there in May was followed by a crackdown on illegal immigrants, which led to some 200,000 Cambodians leaving the country. Many crossed the border into the town of Poipet, which struggled to cope with the influx. Though the army helped returnees complete their journeys to their home towns, and even distributed food, the reason for the crisis remains: high unemployment in Cambodia continues to push people to seek work abroad. Photo: John Vink/Magnum Photos

(Above) **BURMA:** A small ray of hope: trainee Rohingya nurses at Dapaing Village Hospital in Sittwe, Rakhine state. Health facilities for the half-million Rohingya population in the isolated northwest state are virtually non-existent, with just a handful of hospitals and clinics and one doctor per 80,000 people, compared to the national average of 1:400. The infant mortality rate among Rohingyas is also three times higher than the average. In February, the government – whose immigration minister last year said that 'there has never been a Rohingya race in Rakhine' – expelled the main aid agency that had been providing healthcare there. Photo: Gemunu Amarasinghe/AP/Press Association Images

EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

(Above) **ALBANIA:** The church of Shen Koll in Derven, a village 20 kilometres north of the capital, Tirana, opens its doors in preparation for a visit by Pope Francis in September. Fifteen Muslim families contributed to the cost of renovating the stone church. Over half the population of Albania is Muslim, with around 15 per cent Christian, but all religious communities were oppressed under communist rule, and since then Albania's interfaith harmony has been held up as a model for other countries. One Muslim contributor to the church explained: 'Helping each other helps us cope with poverty and life's difficulties.' Photo: Hektor Pustina/AP/Press Association Images

(Above) **BRITAIN:** Cyclists grateful for a sunny day take part in the World Naked Bike Ride in London, June 2014. There is a serious road-safety message behind the antics – more than 3,000 cyclists are injured each year in Britain and in 2013 over 100 were killed. The event – which takes place in cities across the world – also aims to raise awareness of our current dependency on oil and other non-renewable energy for transport.
Photo: Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

(Left) **SLOVAKIA:** Children carry their shopping up the crumbling concrete stairs in one of the highrise blocks of the Lunik IX estate in the city of Kosice. The estate became home to 2,500 Roma after the destruction of their nearby village in 1979. Since then, the population of the highrise blocks has trebled and living conditions are appalling. As the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion' draws to a close in 2015, discrimination continues to grow in Slovakia: 14 'walls of separation' have been built since 2008, isolating Roma communities from their neighbours.
Photo: Bjoern Steinz/Panos

(Above) **SYRIA:** Female soldiers from the Kurdish YPJ (Women's Protection Unit) clean their rifles. In November, the local government in a majority Kurdish area of Syria passed a decree granting women equal rights. Women, the declaration from Al-Jazira canton states, should benefit from 'equality… in all walks of public and private life' and enjoy equal pay, maternity rights and full inheritance rights. The Syrian government does not recognize any of the Kurds' self-proclaimed administrations, but observers note that the decree will certainly be considered an affront by militant groups in the country. Photo: Tim Dirven/Panos

MIDDLE EAST

(Above) **GAZA:** Khalil, aged six, sits in his damaged bedroom. More than 108,000 Palestinians lost their homes in July/August 2014 during Protective Edge, the latest Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip. In total, over 18,000 housing units were lost; the majority of those displaced were children. While the media's attention has moved elsewhere, Gazans continue to pick up the pieces of their lives. But with so much damage to repair, the rebuilding process could take 20 years, according to UN agencies. Photo: Anne Paq/activestills.org

(Below) **IRAN:** Coalminers eat lunch at a mine in a mountain in Mazandaran province, northeast of the capital, Tehran. They earn just $300 a month, a little over the minimum wage. In January, thousands of miners stopped work in protest against working conditions and the dismissal of Bahram Hassaninejad, the secretary of the workers' labour union. Hassaninejad had been arrested at an earlier strike, at Chadormalu Mine in the central province of Yazd, where he was supporting the miners' demands for better pay and conditions.
Photo: Ebrahim Noroozi/AP/Press Association Images

(Left) **AFGHANISTAN:** Fighting chance: a young female boxer pauses during a training session. There are now only 12 women in the Afghanistan National Olympic Committee's boxing club. In the past, with support from NGOs, Afghanistan had a 25-strong team of women boxers who received a salary and transportation to and from the Kabul Stadium where they train. That funding has now dried up, but the women remain determined to compete in the 2016 Olympics. Photo: Massoud Hossaini/AP/Press Association Images

(Below) **NEPAL:** Out in the cold: 14-year-old Uttara Saud sits inside a *chaupadi* shed because she is menstruating and therefore considered 'unclean'. The tradition of *chaupadi* is observed in many rural parts of Nepal, including Legudsen, Uttara's village. Women are cut off from society while on their period, forced to sleep in rickety sheds or draughty outbuildings. They are not allowed to enter houses or temples, use public water sources, take part in festivals or touch others. Some even die from illness, exposure or animal attacks. The practice was banned in 2005, but is still common in some regions. Photo: Navesh Chitrakar/Reuters

SOUTH ASIA

(Below) **BANGLADESH:** Villagers peer over the crumbling Jamuna riverbank near Bogura, where their graveyard has been lost to the water. The banks of this mighty waterway are eroding at an alarming rate – in some places as much as two kilometres per year – wiping out entire villages and leaving destitute families to eke out a perilous existence. Photo: GMB Akash/Panos

(Above) **PERU:** A rescued lion missing an eye rests in a temporary refuge in Lima. He and 20 other lions were rescued from circuses over the last year by Animal Defenders International and the Peruvian authorities, implementing a 2012 ban. They will be joined by 23 other rescued felines from Colombia and Argentina, then taken to their new home in the United States at a wild animal sanctuary in Denver in early 2015. There are now no more wild animals in Peru's circuses. Photo: Rodrigo Abd/AP/Press Association Images

(Below) **VENEZUELA:** Instrument of change: Juan Carlos Marron was paralysed after being caught in the crossfire of a neighbourhood shoot-out in Caracas, one of the world's most violent cities. Now, 12 years later, the 27-year-old has joined a groundbreaking rehabilitation programme that teaches paraplegic people the skills to repair and build musical instruments. Having struggled with depression since the shooting, he says he is enjoying both physical and psychological benefits: 'This has helped me keep my mind busy.' The workshops are run by Venezuela's national youth orchestra and the Venezuelan Foundation for the Cure of Paralysis. Photo: Fernando Llano/AP/Press Association Images

AMERICAS

(Above) **BRAZIL:** Indigenous Ka'apor warriors tie up loggers before expelling them from their territory in the Amazon. Tired of constant, often violent, invasions of their land, the Ka'apor decided to remove any illegal loggers they could find. They set fire to trucks, confiscated weapons and set up monitoring camps. 'Our forest was being taken away from us, but we woke up,' explained the Ka'apor leader, Irakadju. 'Many whites feel that the standing forest is of no use. They cannot see that a living jungle is good for the entire world and helps the Earth to breathe.' Photo: Lunae Parracho/Reuters

Dominican Republic

A visitor to Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic (DR), might come away with two broadly positive impressions: the DR has a very rich history and a bright future. The historic centre of Santo Domingo, founded by Bartholomew Columbus in 1498, is a UNESCO world heritage site; this was the original seat of Spanish power in the New World and features the earliest cathedral, monastery and university in the Americas. Surrounding this is the hyper-modern city of today, with shiny new shopping malls catering for the growing middle class as well as for the numerous tourists that have made this the most visited country in the Caribbean.

On the face of it, the Dominican Republic has been doing quite well. The economy has rebounded from the global financial crisis and grown consistently over the last few years, thanks to tourism, free trade zones and mining exports as well as the significant remittances sent from the Dominican diaspora. This is the largest economy in the Caribbean and the ninth largest in Latin America.

A November 2013 Latinobarómetro poll ranked President Danilo Medina the most popular president in Latin America (with an approval rating of 74 per cent). His popularity stems from a political persona that is often described as down-to-earth as well as from his promise to raise spending on education to 4 per cent of GDP (it was just 1.9 per cent in 2012, despite the 4 per cent figure being mandated by the constitution).

Behind the apparent success lie significant problems, however. Front and centre is the DR's relationship with neighbouring Haiti, which is the poorest country in the Americas. The DR's economic success has, to some extent at least, been built on Haitian labour, yet Haitian migrants and Dominican-Haitians face considerable discrimination and have been subject to arbitrary detention and deportation.

The decision by the Constitutional Court to retroactively rescind the citizenship of Dominicans of Haitian descent born after 1929, thereby rendering some 200,000 people stateless, is the latest chapter in this bitter story. The DR has since withdrawn from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights rather than comply with an order to rescind the Constitutional Court's decision.

Discrimination against the LGBT community and a zero-tolerance policy on abortion are further indices of conservatism, while frequent power outages and especially widespread electricity theft symbolize the waste that characterizes many aspects of Dominican life.

Moreover, unemployment is high, particularly among the young, and a sizeable part of the population is under-employed. The poverty rate is still high (41 per cent as of 2011) and real wages have also declined considerably. There is significant income inequality and, in contrast to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, inequality is worsening.

Violence and crime also continue to present a problem. Medina pledged to reform and create 'a new police' upon his ascent to the presidency. Yet this does not seem to have happened. Civil-rights organizations point to the worryingly high number of extrajudicial shootings carried out by the police and to endemic corruption within law-enforcement agencies.

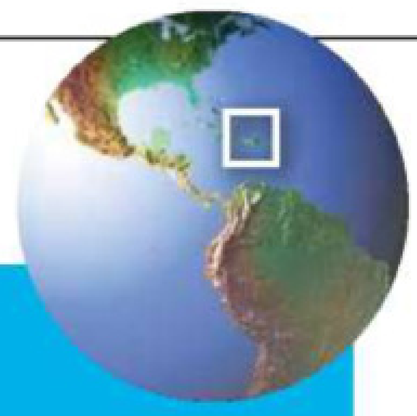
The fact that the police are poorly paid does not help the fight against corruption. This, together with heavy tourist traffic and a large banking sector, has meant that the DR has been fertile ground for Colombian and Puerto Rican drug traffickers, and the country has become a major trans-shipment point for cocaine destined for the US and elsewhere, as well as a centre for money laundering.

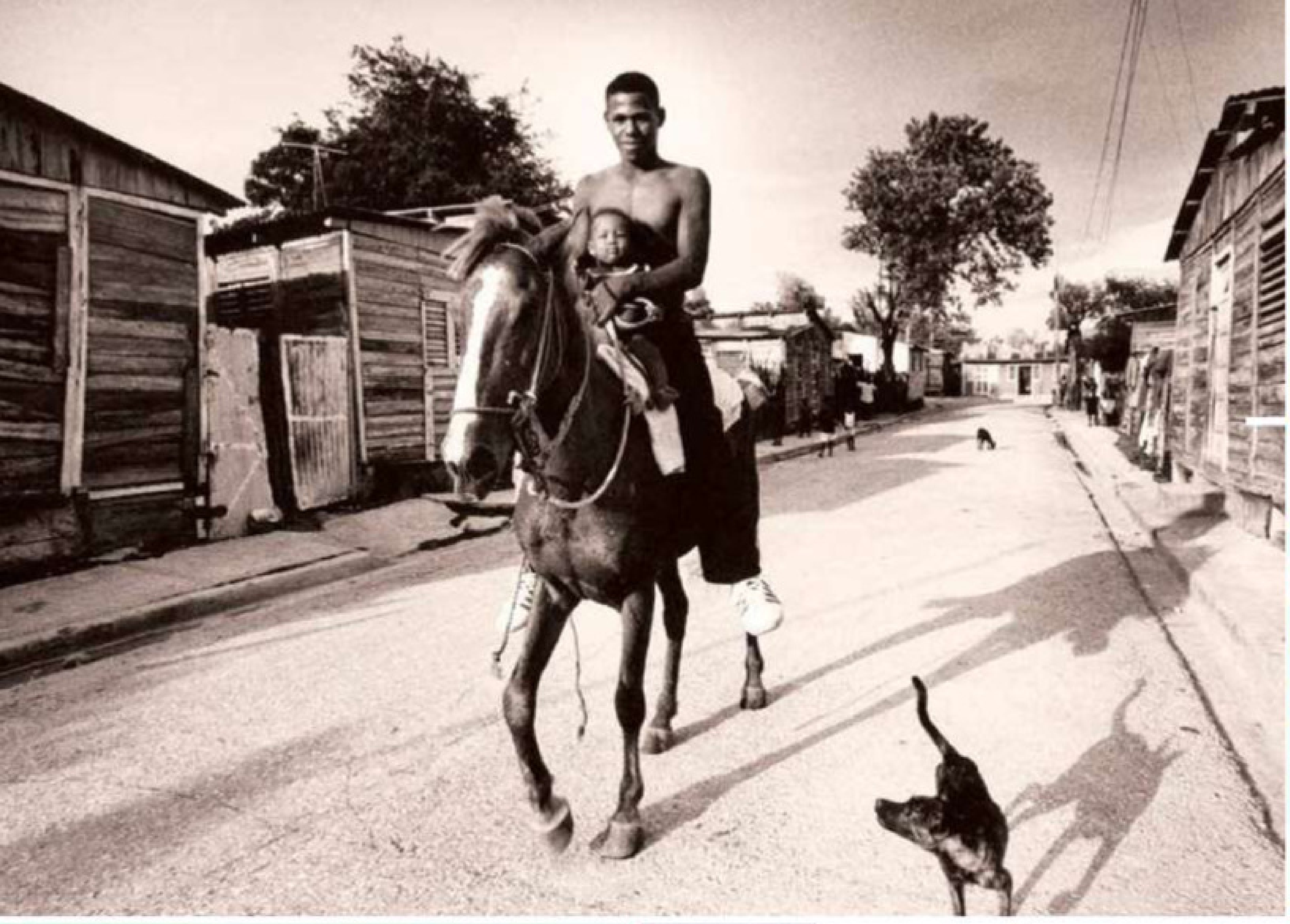
As so often, then, tourist first impressions of a country based on glimpses of its capital and its beaches can be deeply misleading. ■

Russell White

At a glance

Leader: President Danilo Medina Sánchez.
Economy: GNI per capita $5,620 (Haiti $810, United States $53,670).
Monetary unit: Dominican Peso.
Main exports: The DR has historically been an exporter of coffee, sugar and tobacco. The growth of the service sector and the emergence of free trade zones has seen the country move into producing medical instruments, low-voltage protection equipment and t-shirts.
The World Bank says that annual GDP growth averaged 5.5% per cent between 1991 and 2013.
Population: 10.4 million. Annual population growth rate 1990-2013: 1.6%. People per square kilometre 213 (UK 260).
Health: Infant mortality rate 24 per 1,000 live births (Haiti 55, US 6). Lifetime risk of maternal death 1 in 360 (US 1 in 1,800). HIV prevalence rate 0.7%. The government only spends about 1% of GDP on health but the poorest do receive free healthcare.
Environment: Economic success has come at an environmental cost. Deforestation and soil erosion are major problems.
Language: Spanish.
Religion: Christian: the vast majority of the population is Roman Catholic though there is also a sizeable Protestant community.
Human Development Index: 0.700, 102nd of 187 countries (Haiti 0.471, US 0.914).





This series of photographs by Tim Dirven (Panos Pictures) comes from the village of Penuela, near Santiago, in the north of the Dominican Republic. All feature children, and all are named but for the mother and daughter top right. Moving clockwise from there: six-year-old Lester Sosa plays dominoes with his four-year-old sister Lucy on the porch of their home; Nancy Mercedes Florian with two-year-old grandchild Walner, husband Bernardo and motorbike; Nora Payano (32) holds Ronald, her one-year-old grandson, who is being treated for a lung infection. In the main picture is horse rider Jose Maria Cabral, who says: 'I like to spend time with my son. He's just a baby now but I hope he will be a brave man. He loves horses and I take him for a ride every day.'

Star ratings

Last profiled March 2002

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★

About 40% of the country's GDP is in the hands of the richest 10%, while the bottom half of the population receives less than 20%. **2002 ★★**

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

73. Life expectancy stands at 77 years for women and 71 years for men. **2002 ★★★★**

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

The 2010 Dominican Constitution outlawed abortion, which is now illegal even in cases of rape, incest or when the mother's life is in danger. Women had 19% of the seats in Parliament in 2013.

2002 ★★★

FREEDOM ★★★

Freedom of the press is guaranteed under the law, and the media incorporate many different voices and political perspectives. But journalists covering official involvement in the drug trade have received threats. **2002 ★★★**

LITERACY ★★★

90%. Some 11% of children of primary age are out of school. **2002 ★★★**

SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★

Homosexuality is legal but the Constitution defines marriage as between a man and a woman, making the DR one of the few countries to have banned gay marriage at the constitutional level. Campaigners accuse the police, the Ministry of the Interior and the Catholic Church of inciting hatred towards the LGBT community.

NI assessment

POLITICS ★★★

The World Bank judges the DR to be an upper-middle-income country. It has successfully mined the tourist dollar: this is the Caribbean's top tourist destination. Away from the resorts, however, income inequality, unemployment, poverty, crime and corruption represent significant challenges. The DR's international reputation has been damaged by its rescinding the citizenship of people with Haitian descent. Its withdrawal from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights raises questions about its commitment to preserving the rights of minorities.

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★★ GOOD
★★★ FAIR
★★ POOR
★ APPALLING

Steve Parry

Life behind the curtain

If you want to see how capitalism works, just look to the sky. No, not heaven. That's got a more feudal set-up, with a King and a Lord running the show. I mean aeroplanes. The commercial jet is modern class society in microcosm, where money doesn't just talk, it uses a megaphone.

First, Business and Economy on planes are a perfect metaphor for the class structure of society. If you are able to stump up the cash, or you are *someone*, you enter via a special door or through a special curtain into a world of untold pleasures. If not, then you are essentially thrown onto a massive flying bus and forced to endure rendition levels of discomfort. Through sheer good luck, I have experienced all three classes despite remaining solidly 'economy and proud'.

The fact that I've blagged seats in all three cabins of a plane is nothing to do with my jet-set playboy lifestyle, I'm leaving that to Russell Brand. Fortunately, I have a job that's flown me business class to Australia a few times. So, think of me more as a competition winner.

I'll be honest: quite apart from the glass of champagne on arrival, the massage button in the seat, the metal cutlery, the wi-fi, the cheese board, the on-board bar and enough hot towels to cleanse every pore in your body, business class is in reality a luxury ghetto of dull privilege but with loads of leg room. Boring tasteless people, in a boring tasteless cabin, being boring and tasteless, which is hard with a free bar.

Business class is designed for people who like to be served, to feel important and pampered, and it's seductive for a time. (Did I mention the bar? There is a bar… on a plane!) But there is something fundamentally wrong with the rich and powerful sitting in big seats directly above the majority of people on board. It's just too literal.

My true lowly credentials were established very early on in the first leg of my first business-class flight when, thanks to my economy-class ways, I ignored the enormous space in front of me and instinctively stuck my legs into the aisle in search of a bit of extra room. This had the unfortunate side-effect of tripping up a member of the cabin crew, causing her to spill a tray of expensive champagne all over three people. Retrospectively, I'm treating it as a piece of anarchistic direct action.

On the second leg, I lucked out with a seat on which the TV was broken. In a matter of minutes an over-attentive air steward appeared and ushered me into the inner sanctum. I had achieved in one trip what those bourgeois wannabes in business could only dream of. I had been upgraded to first class! I was taken to a private pod and given – wait for this – a pair of pyjamas! I'm pretty sure that the people who actually pay for this ridiculous, hollow, arse-kissing, mid-air pamperthon can afford their own PJs.

I spent the entire journey imagining the outrage of the oligarch or sheik in the pod next door when he found out there was an undeserving, economy-class commie sprawled out in his fancy jimjams taking photographs of the complimentary chocolates and laughing his head off. ■

Steve Parry is a comedy writer, performer and political activist. He is Welsh and lives in north London. You can contact him on **Twitter: @stevejparry**

Best of 2014

Berlin aesthetes Einstürzende Neubauten hit the top spot with their *Lament* (above). Powerful *Animism* by Tanya Tagaq (right).

Music

So much to choose from: Tanya Tagaq's **Animism** (NI 477, Strut Records) was powerful; Sarah Jane Morris' **Bloody Rain** (NI 475, Fallen Angel)was impassioned; and I didn't even get round to reviewing Bonnie Dobson and Her Boys' **Take Me for a Walk in the Morning Dew** (Hornbeam). But it's the Berlin aesthetes Einstürzende Neubauten who scoop the CD of 2014 award with the meticulously researched **Lament** (NI 478, Mute). Never has Neubauten's extraordinary collision of noise and song been put to such use. The ostensible theme of **Lament** is the First World War, but the real one is that of fragile humanity.

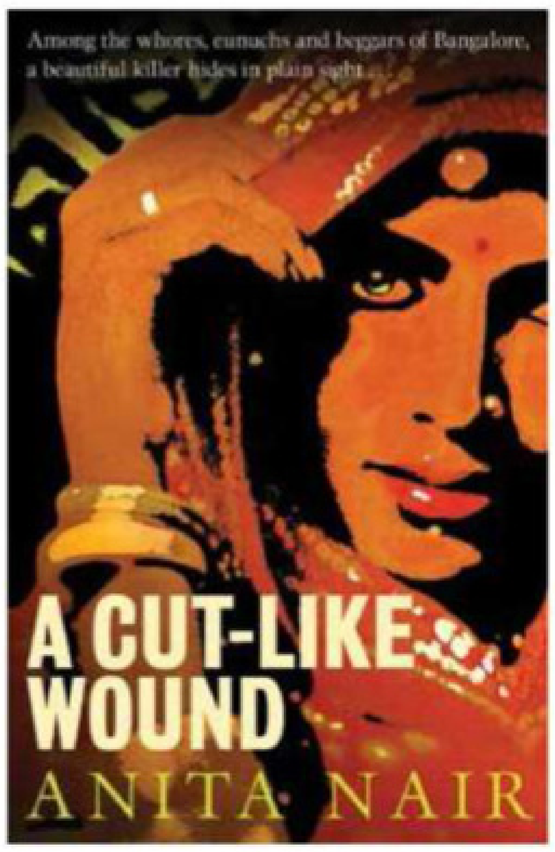
Film

Surprising and rousing, magnificent and mainstream, Matthew Warchus' **Pride** (NI 476) showed the coming together of a striking south Wales mining community and London gay-pride activists. Three fine docs plot the intrusion of the state: Owen Gower's **Still The Enemy Within** (NI 476), its coercive mobilization against striking British miners; Laura Poitras' **Citizen Four**, its clandestine intrusion into our privacy and communication; and **Plot for Peace** (NI 471) its manipulation and preparation of public opinion in South Africa's granting of the vote to all adults.

Winter Sleep (NI 478) was Nuri Bilge Ceylan's epic study of the wintry heart and loveless existence of a superficially charming, posturing ex-actor and landlord.

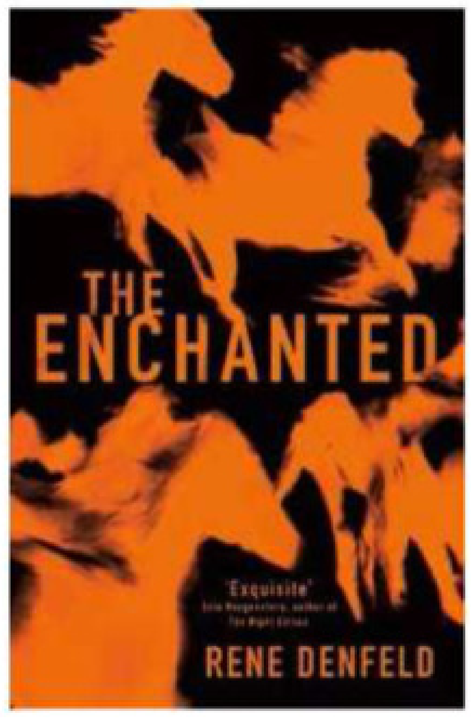
Surprising and rousing *Pride* (above) and Laura Poitras' *Citizen Four* (left).

Books



Set during Ramadan in the steamy heat of Bangalore, Anita Nair's excellent, hypnotically written **A Cut-like Wound** (NI 474, Bitter Lemon Press) was a character-driven police procedural with a difference, that plunged us into a world at once deeply conservative and daringly transgressive.

Rene Denfeld's haunting debut **The Enchanted** (NI 472 Weidenfeld & Nicolson) found beauty in the strongest of settings: death row in a high security prison. The author, a death penalty investigator, produced a story that is both compelling and nuanced. **I Am China** by Xiaolu Guo (NI 474, Chatto and Windus) was a complex and moving tale of life and fate, love and loss, the author handling the intertwined tripartite narratives with great skill. While the much acclaimed Marilynne Robinson's **Lila** (NI 476, Virago) explored the lonely road of human existence with her hallmark tender lucid subtlety.



I Am Yours *(96 minutes)*

written and directed by **Iram Haq**

Caught between two cultures: Iram Haq's atmospheric *I am Yours*.

Mina, an Oslo actor who struggles to get roles, is a single mother with a six-year-old son, Felix. She has a civil relationship with Felix's dad, who looks after his son half the time, and a disastrous relationship with her mum, a peevish self-centred Pakistani matriarch, who's ashamed of her daughter. Mina wants to live her own life, not the life her mother wants for her, but she's lonely and unhappy.

Mina may be an actor, but she's not exactly on the ball when it comes to understanding why she attracts men, and what they may want from her. When, in an Oslo café, she meets Jesper, a hipster Swedish filmmaker, she quickly imagines she's in love with him – and he is with her. As soon as she can she visits him in his very cool Swedish loft, and takes along young Felix. Jesper, as self-centred as her mother, but as 'sensitively' indirect as she is direct, is quickly put out. Sex with her is great, but the kid is less welcome than an IKEA poster.

Haq's atmospheric, unsentimental study of a woman between two cultures is partly her own story. Amrita Acharia is convincing and moving as Mina, who may, or may not, come painfully to some degree of self-knowledge.

★★★★ ML

Pelo Malo (Bad Hair) *(93 minutes)*

written and directed by **Mariana Rondón**

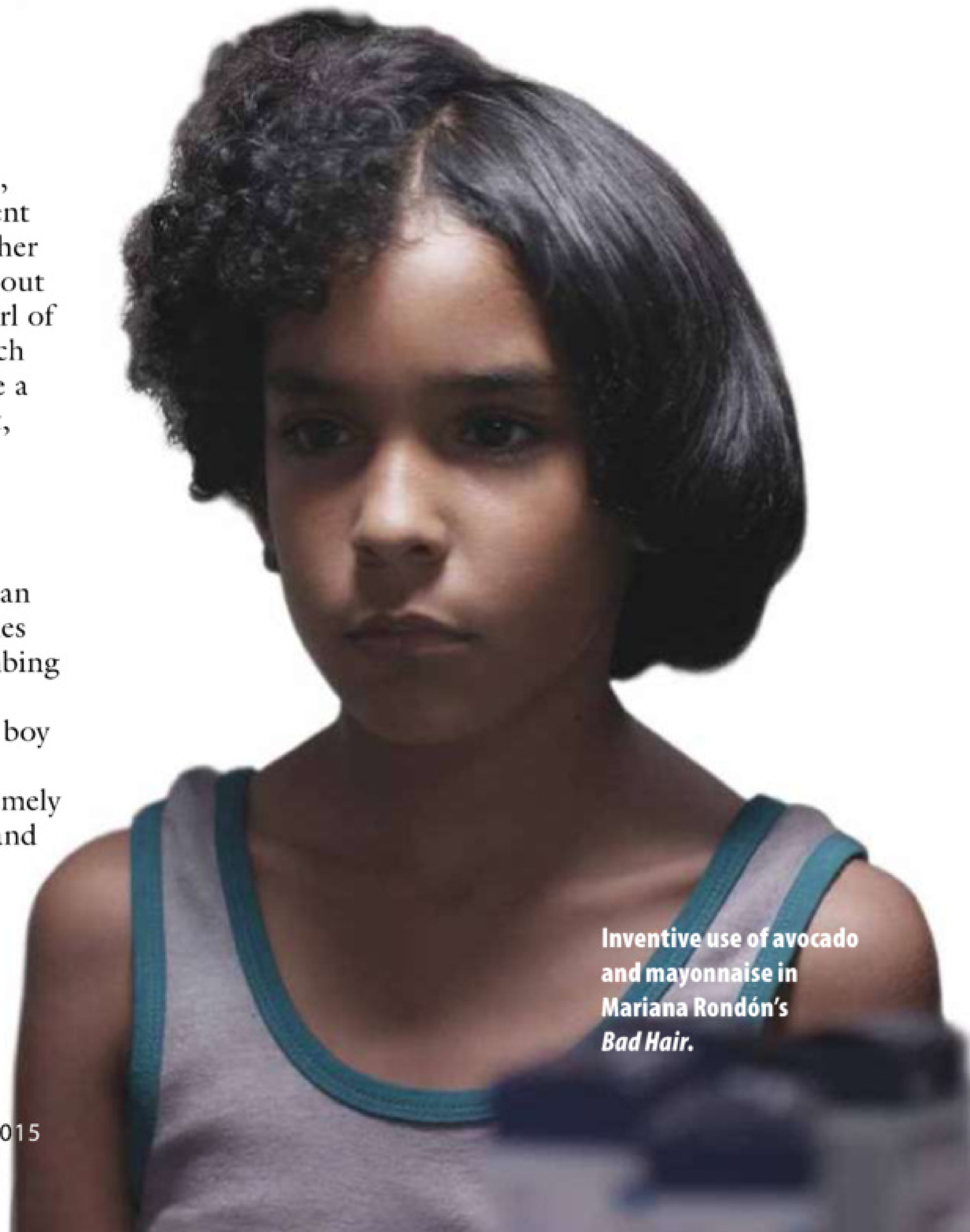
Junior is a mixed-race 10-year-old, living with his mum, Marta, in one of a series of crumbling, hulking apartment blocks in Caracas. Her partner's dead, she recently lost her job as a security guard, and money is short. Junior is about to go to secondary school, and has only one friend, a girl of his own age. The kids' big concern is the photo they each need to have for their new school. He wants to look like a popular crooner, with straightened hair and a shiny suit, which upsets his mother bigtime. She thinks Junior is acting gay.

He's not interested in the neighbourhood kids' break-dancing and they mock him for wandering about with a girl. Marta bans him going to a local coffee stall, run by an older boy who tolerates him hanging around. She explodes whenever she catches him trying to flatten his hair – combing it with water, weighting it down with mayonnaise and avocado. She takes him to see a doctor, who tells her the boy needs a male role model.

Marta, desperate to be earning again, invites her extremely slimy ex-boss back to her flat, to exchange sex for work, and opens Junior's door so he can see what men and women are supposed to do. Junior turns away.

This is a grim tale, with a low-key but telling ending, giving a superb sense of a teeming, edgy Caracas, and the impact of poverty on how we think and what we do.

★★★★ ML



Inventive use of avocado and mayonnaise in Mariana Rondón's *Bad Hair*.

Sweet harmonies, brutal message from Razia Said.

Jamie Ambler

Akory

by **Razia Said** *(Cumbancha CMB 33 CD/download)*

Hailing from Madagascar, musician and environmental activist Razia Said uses her latest album, **Akory**, to impart an urgent message: save Africa from ecological destruction. The title of this, Said's second album, translates as 'What Now?' in her native Malagasy, and amplifies the concerns of her highly praised 2010 debut *Zebu Nation*. It follows, too, from her important work to save Madagascar's rainforests and protect its biodiversity.

Said is schooled in the gentle sounds of Malagasy *salegy* music – accordions, acoustic guitars, *lukanga* lutes and *valihas*, the traditional bamboo zithers found across the country. With sections of added brass and mellifluous electric guitars, **Akory** vibrates with an upbeat mood. But for all the sweetness of the music and its easy harmonies, there is a terrible brutality to her message. Songs with titles such as 'How Will We Survive?', 'My Child' and 'Chasing Our Tails' are wrapped in a grimness that is at odds with **Akory**'s obvious tenderness.

But all is not lost: Said's music is as impressively energetic as is her activism. She is too smart to offer simple answers to corrupt rule, the lure of the fast buck and the devastating consequences of deforestation. But, in raising awareness in such an expressive way, and as someone who sees the potential for positive change at all social and political levels, she is to be applauded. As she sings it: 'Don't wait for tomorrow/Let's act today for our happiness.'

★★★★ LG

raziasaid.com

MUSIC

Sobre Noites e Dias

by **Lucas Santtana** *(No Format Records! NOF25 CD/LP)*

That Brazil is such a creative churn of all things interesting in pop and dance music is not exactly news. Historically, this is the country that created its own politically savvy psychedelia in the 1960s; invented its own operating techniques for synthesizers (the early machines came without any Portuguese instructions) in the 1980s; fell upon bands as diverse as Talking Heads and Kraftwerk, and genres as different as reggae and punk, as sources of material to deconstruct and reassemble in ever-wilder ways. Like balladeer Devendra Banhart and Afro-bricolage-punks Metá Metá (reviewed in NI 461 and NI 472), musician Lucas Santtana follows in this tradition, with the chosen medium of **Sobre Noites e Dias**, his third album to be released outside of Brazil, being a no-rules-allowed electro pop.

No rules here means unexpected combinations (dub, African highlife and Sixties psychedelics on a sun-drenched 'Diary of a Bike' or Philip Glass-inspired strings on 'Human Time') and lots of collaborations. Santtana brings in guests such as the major French movie star Fanny Ardant and French-Nigerian rapper Samuël 'Féfé' Adebiyi and from Brazil, members of Metá Metá and DJ/producer Omulu, a star within the country's technobrega movement. Throughout, **Sobre Noites e Dias** is predicable only in its unpredictability and its high-quality leftfield nature is a breath of fresh air.

★★★★ LG

noformat.net

Lucas Santtana: no rules allowed.

The Alphabet of Birds

by **SJ Naudé** *(& Other Stories, ISBN 9781908276445)*

In his introduction to this début collection of stories by the South African writer S J Naudé, Damon Galgut describes them as 'cool and intelligent, unsettling and deeply felt'. Certainly, there is a distanced, disquieting feel to the writing in these tales of love and exile. Many of the characters – some of whom appear in more than one narrative – ache with a half-understood desire to belong to something, anything, even while their actions cut the bonds that would make such belonging possible.

Only one story is set wholly within South Africa; Naudé's protagonists drift restlessly through continents and cultures, but the homeland is a constantly present touchstone to these deracinated 'lapsed South Africans'. The notion of borders, whether actual and geographical or psychological, sexual or artistic is a recurring motif. In 'War, Blossoms' a man caring for his dying mother is wracked with indecision whether to admit a former lover into his grieving process.

Elegiac longing hangs over these stories, as each character strives for a sense of place and purpose, which they struggle to name, even to themselves. Action, movement, travel become an answer of sorts to their ill-defined questing, to the point where language itself becomes inadequate to convey what it is that drives them on. 'You've talked enough,' one character tells another, 'talking is over.'

★★★ PW

andotherstories.org

BOOKS

The Shifts and the Shocks

by **Martin Wolf** *(Penguin, ISBN 978 0718 197971*

Martin Wolf is prepared to shift. In 2004 he explained *Why Globalization Works*. So after 2007 he was truly shocked by the onset of the Great Recession; nothing in economic orthodoxy had allowed for the possibility.

In his latest book the respected *Financial Times* commentator has concluded that 'a financial sector able to devour economies from within' has become a sort of cancerous growth. Wolf's ultimate ambition is to save liberal democracy. He's got a job on his hands, given how little enthusiasm liberal democracy shows for saving itself.

There were 147 banking crises worldwide between 1970 and 2011; they have been getting progressively worse, and there's no good reason to believe they will stop.

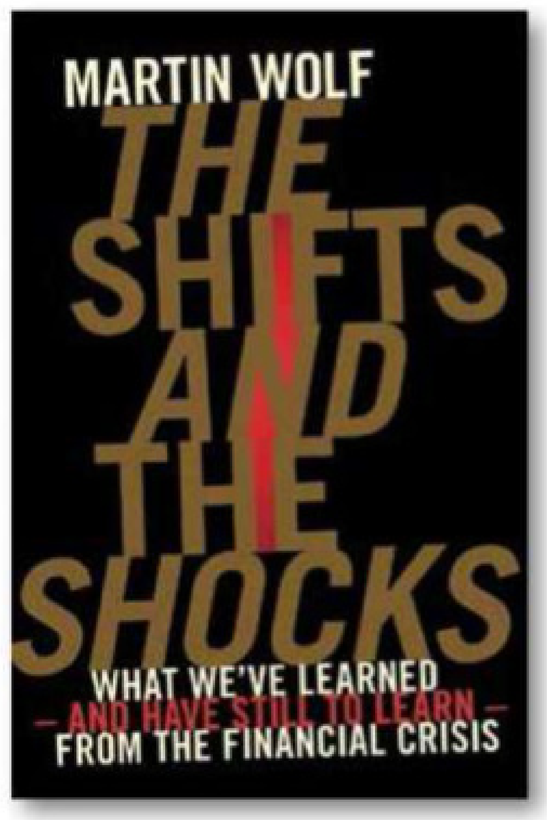
The big banks are bigger and fewer, blatant scams have become their 'business model'. Most of what they do is completely useless. Nothing that ails the underlying 'real' economies of rich countries has been resolved.

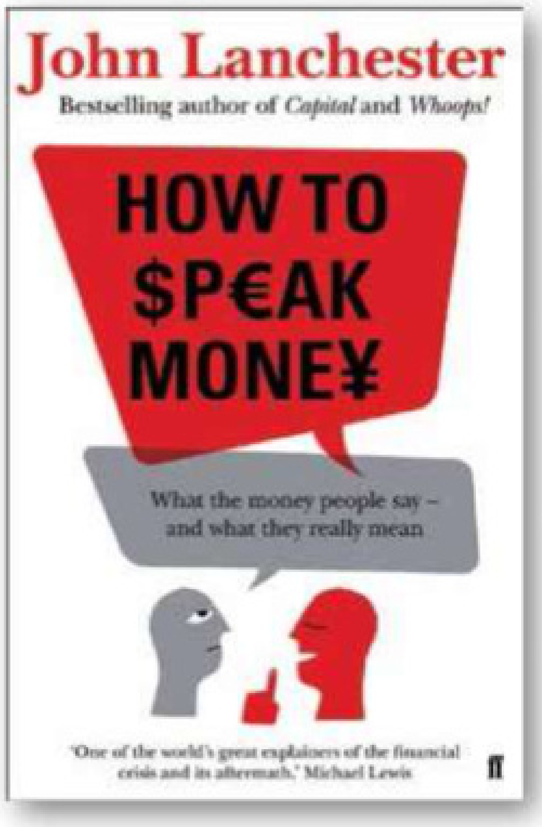
Wolf observes that 'Banks, and particularly big banks, should be viewed as more a part of the state than of the private sector.' The liberal and the democratic in liberal democracy have become detached, irreconcilable.

No-one with a phobia for economists, whose views are surveyed in this book, will have fun digesting it. But the fact that Wolf's brilliant but sometimes desperate defence of liberal democracy leads inexorably towards economic heresy makes this a very important book indeed.

★★★ DR

penguin.com




John Lanchester
Bestselling author of Capital and Whoops!
HOW TO $P€AK MONE¥
What the money people say – and what they really mean
'One of the world's great explainers of the financial crisis and its aftermath.' Michael Lewis

How To Speak Money

by **John Lanchester** *(Faber, ISBN 9780571309818)*

Have you ever stopped to analyse the language of money? You may have noticed that it's obfuscating and layered in a web of cryptic codes. If you've never given it too much thought then John Lanchester's **How to Speak Money** is a book you should really get your hands on.

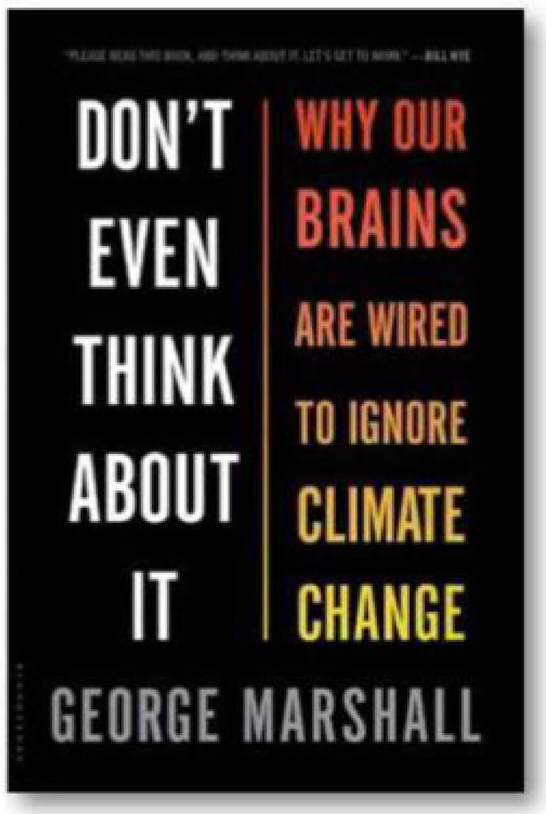
Money is complicated for a reason, he argues: the small percentage of people in society who have most of it are determined to prevent you figuring out how it works. A number of questions that used to exist in public debate have now been erased from our culture, due to the neoliberalist agenda that's dominated since the late 1970s. For example, why does capitalism go bust every few years? And how come the 'expert' mainstream economists are no longer willing to talk openly about Marx's surplus theory of value?

This concise and lucid book is an effective A to Z of finance terminology – and more. It aims to broaden the public conversation about money and bring a measure of humanity to it. Lanchester's thesis is direct, brilliant and effective: strip down the language of money, simplify it, and give it back to the masses.

Read this book right away is my advice.

★★★★★ JPO

faber.co.uk



Don't Even Think About It

by **George Marshall** *(Bloomsbury, ISBN 9781620401330)*

George Marshall, founder of the Climate Outreach and Information Network, is well-placed to ask why we are doing so little to combat climate change. Marshall's argument – already raising hackles in the environmental community – is that our brains are 'hardwired' by evolution to prioritize immediate and proximate threats and downplay or discount those that are more distant or long-term. Thus, despite the fact that most of us recognize climate change as real, we are predisposed to ignore it as a personal threat and disinclined to pressurize our leaders to tackle the causes of global warming.

Marshall assembles an impressive weight of evidence to support his claim, talking to scientists working in the field as well as nay-sayers from the well-funded climate change denial lobby. He writes clearly and entertainingly about a complex subject; but I must admit to confusion as to who this book is aimed at. Those already working to raise public awareness and mobilize action will feel undermined by his thesis, and surely those inclined to ignore, for whatever reason, the scientific evidence of looming climate catastrophe will feel vindicated in their inaction.

Overall, despite an upbeat final chapter (oddly sprinkled with sentences in bold capitals) the message of **Don't Even Think About It** is a dispiriting and, it is to be hoped, fallacious one; that we are sleepwalking our way to disaster and even our best efforts are doomed to be too little, too late.

★★★ PW

bloomsbury.com

Also out there...

MUSIC **Matana Roberts** describes her compositional practice on her Coin Coin project as 'panoramic sound quilting'. *River Run Thee* (Constellation) is the latest instalment in her brilliant series that uses the full range of voice and electro-acoustic effects as a way of approaching African-American history and experience.

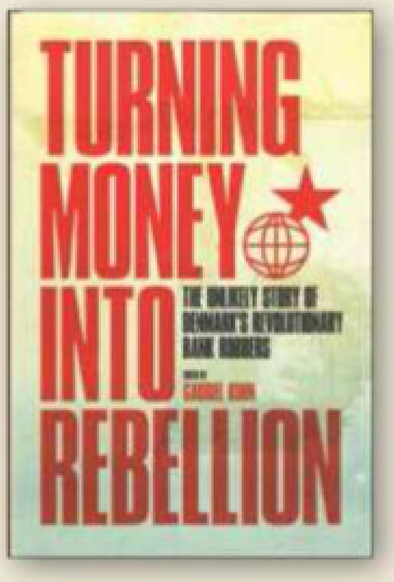
A New Day (World Village) from Senegalese singer **Carlou D** possesses a similar dignity. The former Positive Black Soul rapper brings his melodious voice and new band, one crammed with international talent, back to its African roots with considerable panache.

Matana Roberts 'sound quilting'.

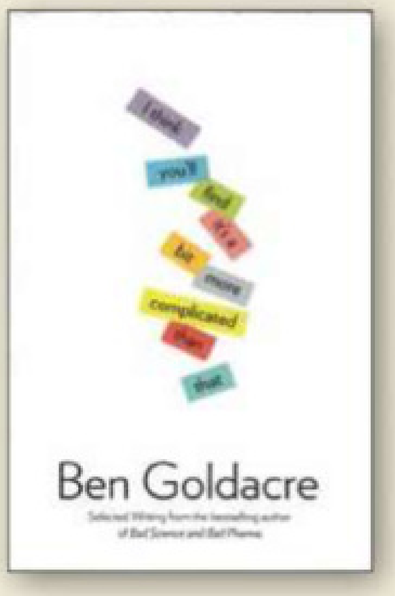
FILM **Open Bethlehem** shows the relentless intrusion of the neighbouring Israeli state's encircling settler townships, separation wall, and callously hostile soldiers on the people of the Palestinian city and province. Leila Sansour's film documents the injustice.

Leila Sansour's *Open Bethlehem*.

On DVD Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky's **Watermark** is an awesome, stirring doc about the human need of water, and our planet-altering use of it. The Chinese Xiluodu dam, six times larger than the Hoover, almost seems too large to be possible. The Colorado river, once teeming with fish, is now no more than a depression in the desert. Visually sublime, tragic – and cautionary.



BOOKS **Turning Money into Rebellion** (PM Press) edited by Gabriel Kuhn is the fascinating historical account of how a group of communists in Denmark called the Blekinggegade Group robbed banks and sent millions of dollars to liberation movements in what was then still called 'The Third World'. A police officer died in their last fateful robbery and the group were captured in 1989 and seven members imprisoned – two of whom provide interviews for this extraordinary book.



Ben Goldacre has been the scourge of bad science, turning his tenacity, rage and humour against quacks, drug companies, government ministers, compliant academics and a fair few statistic-abusing journalists and politicians too. Fourth Estate has published a compendium of some of his best exposés of the powerful, the pompous and the downright shameless. Its title, that wonderful weasel phrase: **I think you'll find it's a bit more complicated than that.**

REVIEWS EDITOR: **Vanessa Baird** email: **vanessab@newint.org**
Reviewers: Louise Gray, Malcolm Lewis, JP O'Malley, David Ransom, Peter Whittaker.

STAR RATING
★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

The DICTATOR and the *Pop*

One unintended consequence of Augusto Pinochet's oppressive 17-year regime, which ended in 1990, is an indie music revival that has put Chile back on the cultural map. ANNE HOFFMAN explains.

On a relentlessly rainy day in Santiago's Nuñoa District, Pamela Sepúlveda is getting ready to perform. She's wearing a big black sweater with silver beading and black leggings. She has long, messy hair, and looks more Brooklyn than Chile. This is still a socially conservative country, and most women are still dressing like it's 1996: scrunchies and shoulder pads.

Behind the synthesizer are box upon box of old records, CDs, books about graffiti, record players and turntables. There's a poster of the 1980s dystopian cult film *Blade Runner* on the wall.

Sepúlveda's compositions are closer in spirit to Madonna at her most soulful ('Like a Prayer') or the art-song of Kate Bush than the Latin super-groups of her youth. But Sepúlveda, whose artistic name is Fakuta, maintains that her music is distinctly Chilean, despite its broad appeal. 'We have an intrinsic melancholy that's different from Brazilian *saudade*,' she says, suggesting that theirs is sadder, informed more by rain and geographic isolation than searing heat and rainforest humidity.

Her compositions and lyrics evoke the experience of a big, over-planned party where the guests have only shown up for free food. The regret in Fakuta's songs draws attention to moments of heartbreak and 'could have beens'. One of her most popular lyrics – 'You won't follow me into my delusions or even to go buy bread' – is often repeated by teenage girls and sensitive 20-something guys on tumblr.

Pop renaissance

Sepúlveda is part of an indie-pop renaissance in Chile. Her career is just taking off, but others, like performers Javiera Mena and Gepe, have been playing big, international crowds for years.

This upsurge is an unintended consequence of Chile's darkest years: the 17-year military dictatorship led by General Augusto Pinochet. As a strong admirer of US capitalism, Pinochet's deepest desire was to make Chileans into consumers – self-sustained, apolitical profit-makers. But it is his repressive rule that seeded Sepúlveda's style of music. Like other children who grew up in the city's poor *poplaciones*, where Pinochet's secret service picked off the streets anyone looking too derelict or too much like an activist, Sepúlveda spent much of her childhood inside. There, she mostly watched US TV. She and her peers consumed Madonna videos and fantasy

Picture of Pinochet: Keystone Pictures USA / Alamy

Star

An unintended legacy: Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship led to musical innovation from Pamela Sepúlveda and others.

programmes like *Alf* (about an alien who crash-lands in the middle of the US suburbs) for hours at a time. Absorbing the bright colours of 1980s pop culture has made Sepúlveda's generation one of Chile's most creative. They've developed a new melody – one based more on raw feeling, 1970s disco and 1980s pop music than explicit protest. Their music isn't particularly political, but without Chile's dictatorship, it could never have existed.

'A strong sense of us'

Sepúlveda was born in 1982, a year before protests would start again against the country's decade-old dictatorship. Her working-class neighbourhood, La Florida, was known for leftist activism and, as a result, scenes of government repression: guns, kidnappings, brutality.

When Pinochet gained power in 1973 with the aid of a US-backed military coup, he sent soldiers into poor neighbourhoods to quell dissent, and imposed a curfew. Santiago was in chaos, but soon it would assume a kind of military order. Before the coup, Chile had been an economically poor country with a rich literary and cultural tradition. Margaret Power, a US professor who lived in Chile during the early years of the regime, explains: 'Up until that point, it had been such a relational culture. There was such a strong sense of "us". I think people felt they belonged to things.'

Pinochet, in his desire for rapid economic growth, changed Chile's course. He was more interested in consumers than culture. Take, for instance, the example of Villa Grimaldi. Once an intellectual and cultural meeting place on the outskirts of Santiago, during the regime it became a torture and detention complex. Chile's current president, Michelle Bachelet, was tortured there when she was a young woman. Today, the site houses a memorial for the people who were disappeared during the country's years of military rule (3,000 in total, 229 from that site). They were typically quite young, many in their early twenties.

The regime's repressive atmosphere encouraged people to stay insular. Many Chileans internalized the message not to 'make waves'

To a large extent, the regime's repressive atmosphere encouraged people to stay insular. 'There was a sense that people should basically not do anything to draw attention to themselves, that they should put their nose to the grindstone and work hard to get ahead,' explains Power. Many Chileans internalized the message not to 'make waves'. Chile did grow economically: malls were built, and shopping became popular. But among the country's young people, the plan didn't entirely work.

By 2011, the next generation of activist-oriented youth were protesting everything from large-scale dam construction to overpriced college tuition, while their artistic counterparts had banded together to create their own record labels and write some of the most innovative indie-pop songs to come out of Latin America.

As Sepúlveda says, all that childhood time inside during the 1980s was like an extended creative cocoon. 'TV showed you a lot of fantastic programmes and movies and it was all imaginary. It was not like reality, which was,' she pauses, 'without so many colours.'

During college she studied architecture, which she still practises when she's low on money. But her passion is music, and she finds herself in a strong community of fellow performers who support each other. She and her friends, like Ana Gallardo Pinto and Daniela Saldías, had always wanted to write their own songs. But they received almost no music education at school. So they listened hard to the music they loved, and then went to thrift stores and music shops, where they found cheap used synthesizers and bass guitars so that they could teach themselves the basics. By its nature democratic, pop is easily reproduced and accessible.

Making music

Soon there was a small scene in Santiago made up of do-it-yourself 1980s-influenced indie-pop acts. 'All of us started to make music when the industry was completely dead in Chile,' mega-producer Alex Anwandter said in an interview in 2012. 'That translated to... an artistic search that didn't correspond to any industry criteria. It didn't have to comply with any standard. And for some reason, it has resonated with people and succeeded.'

'In the beginning, we were the audience for each other,' says Sepúlveda. In 2010, Sepúlveda and Saldías helped form a DIY record label called Michita Rex. The label's mission statement reads: 'Inspired by the principles of self-determination, reciprocity and collaborative work, [we] aim to expand and diversify the possibilities of listening.'

The new sound, equal parts 1980s worship, folk revival and nostalgia for a lost past, spread far beyond Chile's borders, from Berlin to Tijuana, as well as in clubs and basements all over Chile.

Tonight, Sepúlveda will perform for an audience of teenagers and artists at a book launch for Chilean author Camila Gutierrez. She will take a cab paid for by a US publishing company to get to the venue. The omnipresent Chilean rain will continue to pour down throughout her performance. The space will be freezing, because despite Chile's rapid economic growth, central heating is still a luxury. But Sepúlveda will battle the chill and play the first few chords, and everything will melt away into a moment of pop epiphany as fans bob their heads to the music. This will be their moment. ■

Anne Hoffman is a journalist in San Francisco who learned Spanish in living rooms all over Latin America.

#BlackLivesMatter

I have been trying to keep track.

On Wednesday 3 December, a grand jury determined that there would be no criminal trial of the police officer who killed Eric Garner, an unarmed African-American father of six who was placed in a deadly chokehold for the trivial crime of selling loose cigarettes outside a corner store on Staten Island, in New York City.

The grand jury decision launched an extraordinary wave of protests through early December, the breadth of which was expansive enough to make an exact accounting difficult.

In the days after the announcement, demonstrators poured into the streets in Denver, New Orleans, San Francisco, Austin, Chicago, Atlanta and Miami. They rallied in Kalamazoo, Michigan; Salem, Oregon; and Lithonia, Georgia.

In Los Angeles, protesters lay down across Hollywood Boulevard. In Philadelphia, hundreds of high-school students walked out of morning classes. In Washington DC, Howard University students clogged the city's Union Station, while other protesters blocked Pennsylvania Avenue or rallied outside the White House. In Dallas, activists closed one of the southernmost segments of America's expansive Interstate Highway I-35, while in Minneapolis they blocked one of its northerly stretches.

In New York, protests were varied and persistent. On Thursday, iPhone apps tracking traffic patterns showed Manhattan covered in red alerts. The West Side Highway, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel and Grand Central Station were all shut down.

The next day, signs on the New Jersey turnpike still warned: 'Gridlock Alert Today: New York City.' That night, die-ins interrupted holiday shopping inside both the flagship Apple Store and the city's historic Macy's department store.

All told, one organization reported 170 events in 37 states. This initial tally, however, encompassed just the first 24 hours after the grand jury announcement.

If the country is to be redeemed, it will depend on those who dissent

Photos and reports from the mobilization were marked with distinctive hashtags: #BlackLivesMatter, #ThisEndsToday, #ShutItDown, and Eric Garner's tragic last words, #ICantBreathe.

Trying to keep track of the protests – angry, insistent, inspiring – was far more heartening than compiling a litany of unarmed black men whom authorities have killed.

At this point, even maintaining a list of the most famous cases grows ever more painful and taxing: Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Akai Gurley, Ramarley Graham, Oscar Grant, Sean Bell, Amadou Diallo. And, of course, Michael Brown. The December protests came after months of mobilization in Ferguson, Missouri, where Brown was killed and his body left to lie in the street for more than four hours.

In the wake of Ferguson, several commentators have drawn parallels between the US and South Africa under apartheid. Among them is *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, who has noted some important facts: that 'young black men are shot dead by police at 21 times the rate of young white men', and that 'in America, the black-white wealth gap today is greater than it was in South Africa in 1970'.

Such comparisons have a long lineage. During the Cold War, the civil rights movement benefited from the concern of mainstream politicians that lynchings and high-profile displays of racism were damaging the United States' reputation abroad. None other than Richard Nixon argued that, when it came to America's standing in the world, 'racial and religious prejudice is a gun we point at ourselves.'

Then, as now, if the country is to be redeemed, it will depend on those who dissent – those who are now using their bodies to blockade bridges and highways.

Already, the protests have had an impact: President Obama has met with civil rights leaders, young and old, and has proposed some modest reforms, such as equipping police with video cameras, so that any use of force will be recorded.

To address the true extent of US apartheid, we will need to go much deeper. And that will take greater pressure.

Our hope is that acts of personal sacrifice, creativity and disruption will continue in more ways than we can easily tally. ■

Mark Engler, a senior analyst with Foreign Policy In Focus, is currently writing a book about the evolution of political nonviolence. He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com

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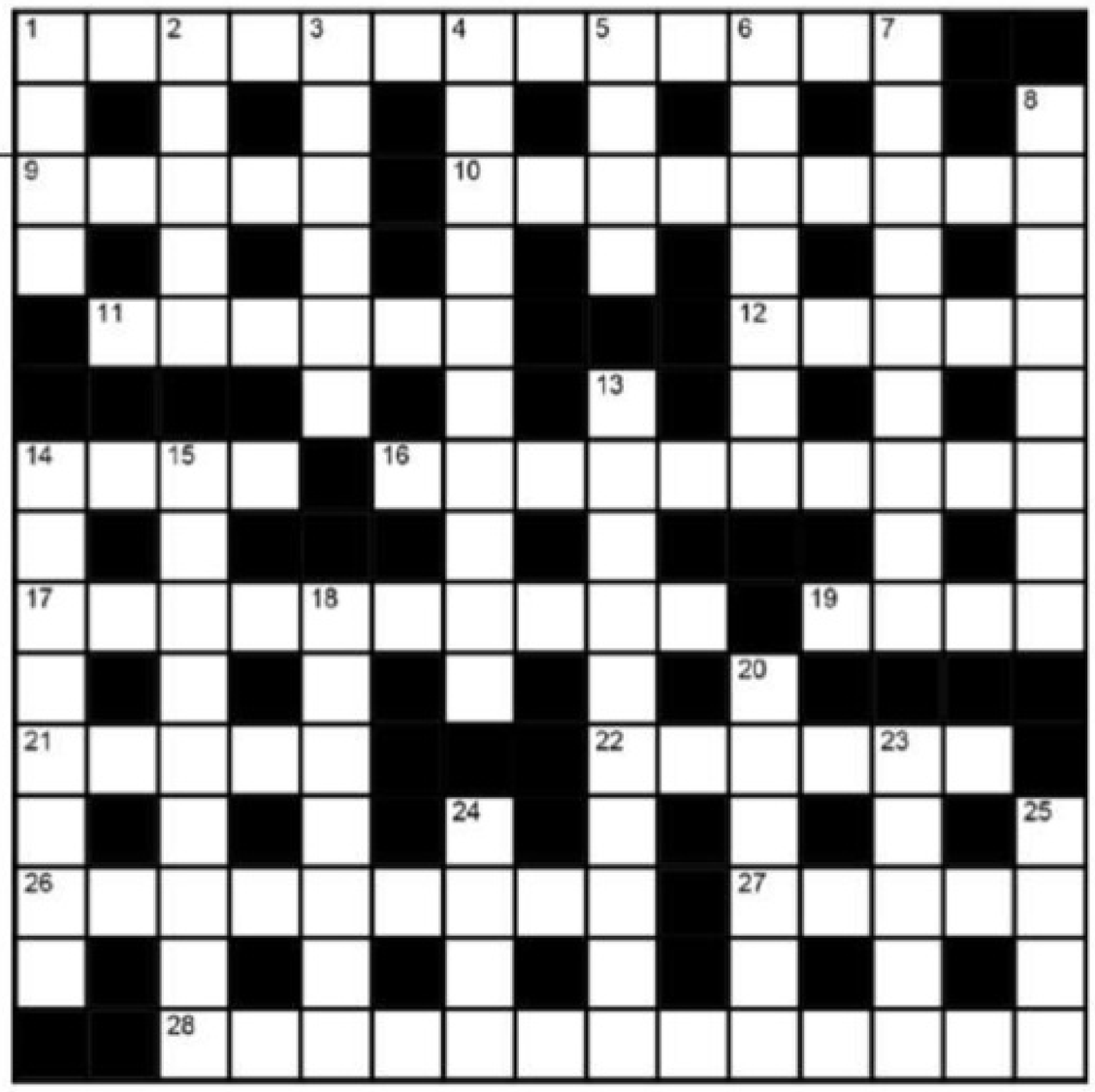
Puzzle Page by Axe

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of $30. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 20 February to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; fax to +44 1865 403346; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org
Winner for Crossword 196: Mary Davies, Llanelli, Wales.

Crossword 198



CRYPTIC Across

1 Ice that's meeting grizzly, reportedly, somewhere near Perth (13)
9 Like to get support around oil port (5)
10 Directions deceive the Queen visiting city in California... (9)
11 ...California: whichever way you look at it, it's N America's 'Promised Land' (6)
12 Some embarrassment for French town –... (5)
14 ...bars British boozers (4)
16 Lake Tito, perhaps, gets to name in the end (5,5)
17 S English uplands, the antithesis of boreal depressions? (5,5)
19 Peter is one poor artist – it gets thrown out (4)
21 Garlic sauce of an Italian origin – Lucca, in the beginning (5)
22 Short article given to sprint here in ancient Greece (6)
26 Bull market in Beijing: maybe one doesn't want to go berserk in it? (5,4)
27 No legs to look at – this one is almost nude (5)
28 It is in Scotland true heroes bid to be free (5,8)

CRYPTIC Down

1 Japanese city's Knight's Order award (4)
2 Girl's name, the second one, it's gone viral in W Africa... (5)
3 ...one rotten name half dropped when up at Nigerian university (6)
4 N Wales area doctors care for Nan (10)
5 Find gold on the roof of church in the old Gascon capital (4)
6/7 Easterners' kin – any assorted tribes who are near neighbours in Africa (7,9)
8 The man for Nancy and Lorraine? (8)
13 Store hay as a regular thing, perhaps for the community in Devon (10)
14 Punishment captured Zulu pirates expected here (8)
15 Load Robin's drunk is a wine from Italy (9)
18 Cabin a fashionable American installed in the Mons area (7)
20 Key to crossing the wild sea between the mouths of two rivers – one flowing through Canada (6)
23 Cold, tough Somerset town (5)
24 One divine writer's lost the golden touch (4)
25 Monstrosity of Scotland separateness issues? (4)

QUICK Across

1 Scottish pass where William of Orange was defeated by the Jacobites in 1689 (13)
9 Second city of Iraq (5)
10 Centre of a fruit-producing region north of San Diego (9)
11 Loosely, ancient Palestine (6)
12 French city, capital of the Pas-de-Calais department (5)
14 Hostelries (4)
16 Canadian lake, the deepest in N America (615m) (5,5)
17 English chalk uplands of Surrey and Kent (5,5)
19 Sovereign, one who abdicated in 1917 (4)
21 Garlic mayonnaise (5)
22 Ancient land straddling the North and Black Seas, now divided between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey (6)
26 Where not to take one crazy with Mad Cow Disease? (5,4)
27 River of NW USA, the Columbia's main tributary (5)
28 130-mile long archipelago to the northwest of Scotland (5,8)

QUICK Down

1 Japanese port city devastated by an earthquake in 1995 (4)
2 Himalayan city (alt spelling); Fever and virus originating in Nigeria (5)
3 Nigeria's second city (6)
4 Castle in 1969, scene of the investiture of the Prince of Wales (modern spelling) (10)
5 Capital of the French department of Gers and of ancient Armagnac (4)
6/7 Peoples of E Africa separated by Ethiopia (7,9)
8 European address for a male from 'my'+'lord' (8)
13 Largest town of N Devon (10)
14 Cornish resort town, near Land's End (8)
15 Italian resort, west of Verona, on Lake Garda (9)
18 Province of Belgium, capital Mons (7)
20 Largest river of British Columbia (6)
23 Somerset town sharing a name with a Swiss member of the beet family (5)
24 Son of Odin (4)
25 Headland (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Banbury, 5 Jaipur, 11 Enchilada, 12 Argos, 13 Mbabane, 14 Andean, 16 Irvine, 18 Ciabatta, 20 East Cape, 22 Troyes, 24 Egmont, 26 Austria, 29 Ostia, 30 Gallipoli, 31 Nassau, 32 Esterel.
Down: 2 Accra, 3 Britannic, 4 Reader, 6 Aland, 7 Pageantry, 8 Ross, 9 Des Moines, 10 Malawi, 15 Hanseatic, 17 Visigoths, 19 Berkshire, 21 Potage, 23 Nablus, 25 Osaka, 27 Rhone, 28 Bonn.

Sudokey 44

The Sudoku that thinks it's a word game!

			7	6		9	5	
8			2		5	1		
					3			
				2				
3	1	4						
	6		5					
		9	6					5
	7	6		4	1	3		9

Now, using the key below, substitute letters for the numbers in the east-central block…

1=C; 2=D; 3=S; 4=A; 5=B; 6=I; 7=Y; 8=H; 9=R

…and make as many words as you can of four letters or more from the nine letters in the keyword, the extra clue to which is: 'Cautious with what comes after a little boy's repelling of the monster'. You cannot use the same letter more than once, nor use proper nouns (excepting the keyword), slang, offensive words, abbreviations, participles or simple plurals (adding an 's' or 'es').

GOOD 60 words of at least four letters, including 25 words of five letters or more.

VERY GOOD 65 words of at least four letters, including 30 words of five letters or more.

EXCELLENT 70 words of at least four letters, including 35 words of five letters or more.

Last month's Sudokey keyword: 'Nelspruit'

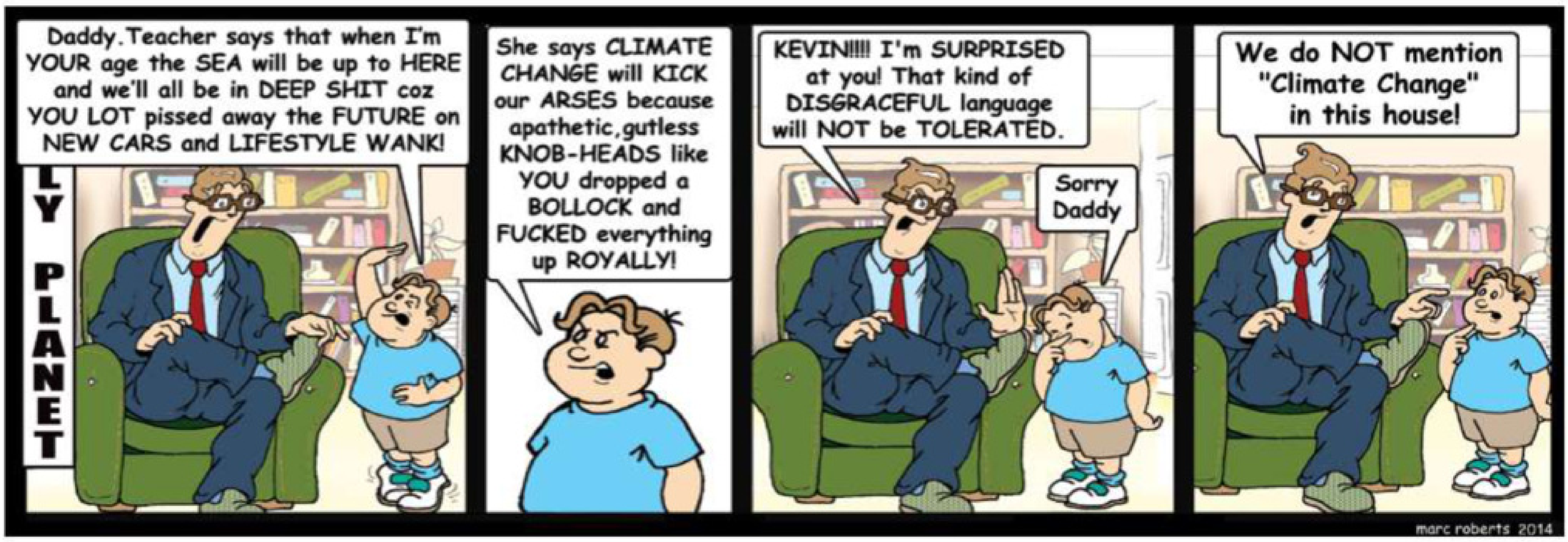
Solution to Wordsearch 43

The 18 inland seas and large lakes were: Aral, Baikal, Balkhash, Caspian, Chad, Erie, Eyre, Huron, Ladoga, Nicaragua, Nyasa, Onega, Ontario, Patos, Superior, Titicaca, Victoria, Winnipeg.

Wordsearch 44

Find the 18 rivers of South America hidden here.

O	Y	A	M	O	C	L	I	P	U	A
O	R	I	N	O	C	O	N	G	R	J
L	S	Z	M	R	H	E	N	A	A	V
O	O	C	A	U	G	I	P	P	V	S
C	J	A	M	R	X	R	U	Z	N	U
N	A	N	O	N	A	R	A	M	O	R
A	P	A	R	N	A	I	B	A	Z	U
R	A	P	E	P	L	A	T	E	A	P
B	T	O	S	A	L	A	D	O	M	R
O	M	A	G	D	A	L	E	N	A	L
D	S	A	R	A	G	U	A	I	A	V


Daddy.Teacher says that when I'm YOUR age the SEA will be up to HERE and we'll all be in DEEP SHIT coz YOU LOT pissed away the FUTURE on NEW CARS and LIFESTYLE WANK!
LY PLANET
She says CLIMATE CHANGE will KICK our ARSES because apathetic,gutless KNOB-HEADS like YOU dropped a BOLLOCK and FUCKED everything up ROYALLY!
KEVIN!!!! I'm SURPRISED at you! That kind of DISGRACEFUL language will NOT be TOLERATED.
Sorry Daddy
We do NOT mention "Climate Change" in this house!
marc roberts 2014

Billy Bragg

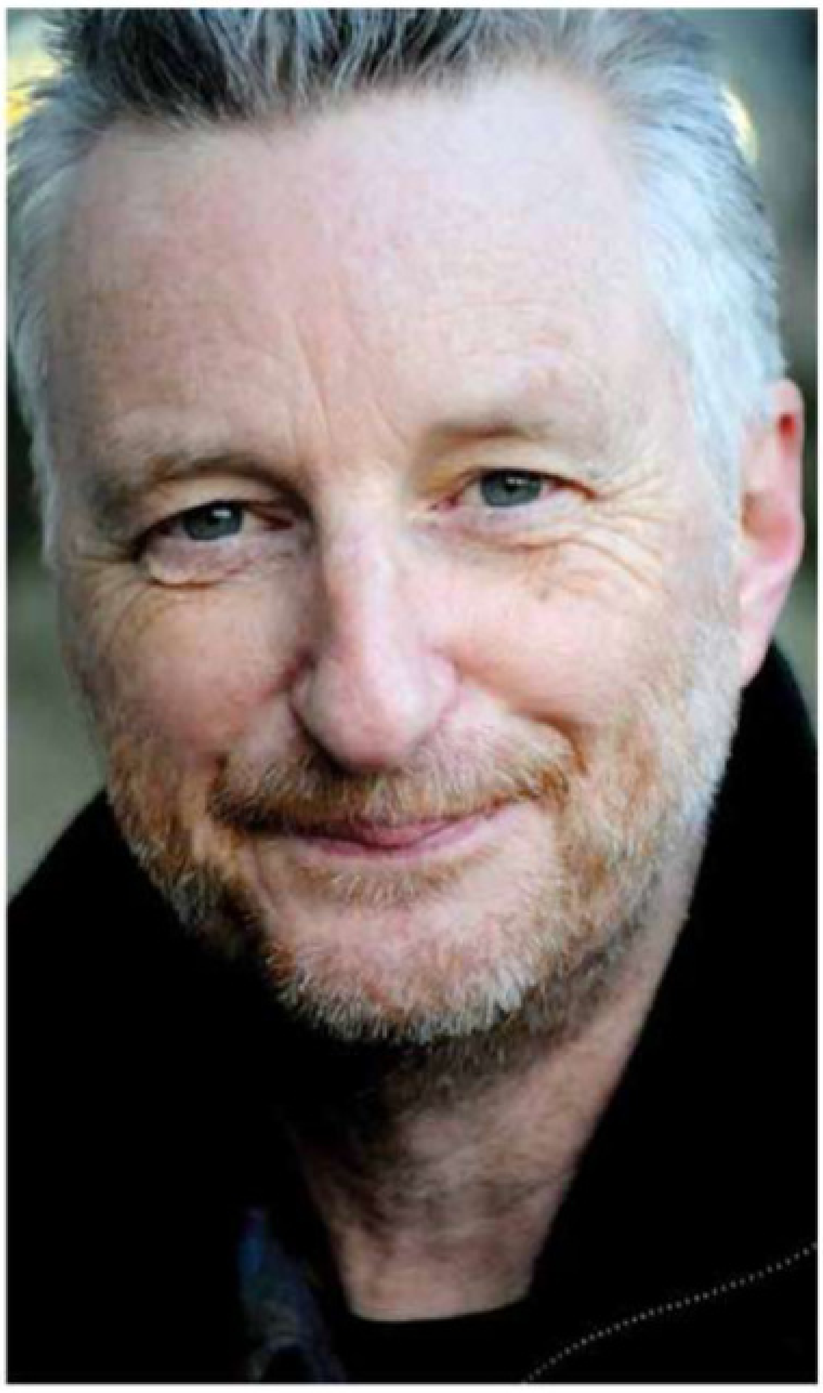
With a career spanning more than 30 years, the English singer-songwriter is equally admired for his longstanding political and grassroots activism. He talks to LOUISE GRAY about protest, Englishness, and why he once cheered a Conservative victory.

You've been engaged in activism for a quarter of a century. Would you say things are better in Britain than they were in the 1980s and 1990s, or worse?
I'd say worse. The inequality gap is wider, working people are unable to put pressure on employers to pay decent wages and thousands of working people have to rely on foodbanks to get by.

You're clearly passionate about political and social justice issues in Britain, from political reform to saving the NHS. Are you engaged in any international issues or campaigns?
I tend to engage in international issues in the countries that I visit on tour. For instance, in early 2014 I was involved in the March in March, a series of national demonstrations against the government of Tony Abbott in Australia. I played at the Sydney demo.

Who would you like to banish from the planet, and why?
I'd banish all those people who say 'nothing ever changes', 'you can't do anything about it'. They could come back when they'd learned to curb their cynicism.

Will the rise of internet sites such as YouTube and Spotify herald the end for independent singer-songwriters trying to make a living from their music?
I was reading somewhere the other day that American musicians went on strike in the 1940s because they believed that they weren't making enough money from the sales of these new-fangled things called records. So maybe there's a clue there as to how we might change the balance of the music industry in favour of the content creators.



James Millar

Which young 'protest singers' do you admire?
Grace Petrie is my favourite of the new generation. Check out her 'Emily Davison Blues'.

Tell us a bit about Jail Guitar Doors, which you founded in 2007...
It's really simple. We find people who are using music to facilitate rehabilitation in prisons and we supply them with instruments.

Following devolution in Scotland and Wales, you've been vocal about reclaiming a positive sense of 'Englishness' for the English. How can we celebrate our 'tribal' qualities without denigrating those of other groups?
'Englishness' is a vague term that seeks to push us all into a single stereotypical box. Modern nations aren't like that any more. If we want to foster a communal sense of belonging, then we need to think of being English as a broader term rooted in where you are rather than where your parents or grandparents were from. Make it an issue of place, not race.

What do you think is the single most pressing global issue in which our readers should get engaged?
I would say climate change because it affects us all and can only be dealt with by collective action.

Can we still change the world?
Yes, we can! But music can't. It has a role to play, bringing people together, focusing their solidarity, making them realize that they are not the only person who cares about a specific issue. But in the end, it's not the artists who have the power to change the word, it's the audience.

Tell us about the time you celebrated a Conservative victory.
It's the only time I've genuinely cheered a Conservative candidate! On the night of the 2010 election, when the BNP [British National Party] were trying to take over Barking & Dagenham council and [BNP leader] Nick Griffin stood against [Labour politician] Margaret Hodge in Barking, many of us had a queasy feeling that the fascists might make a significant breakthrough by taking control of the borough. When the results were read out and it was clear that the Conservatives had pushed the BNP into third place, I knew the council was safe, too. ■

Louise Gray is **New Internationalist**'s music columnist and author of *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Music.*

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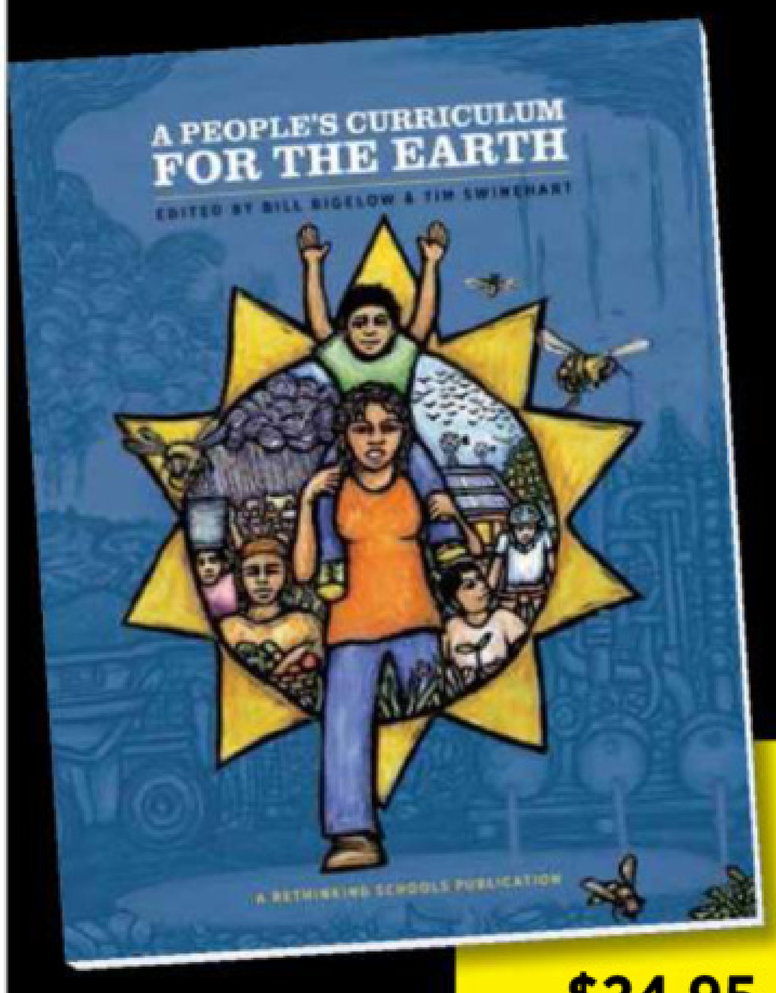

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